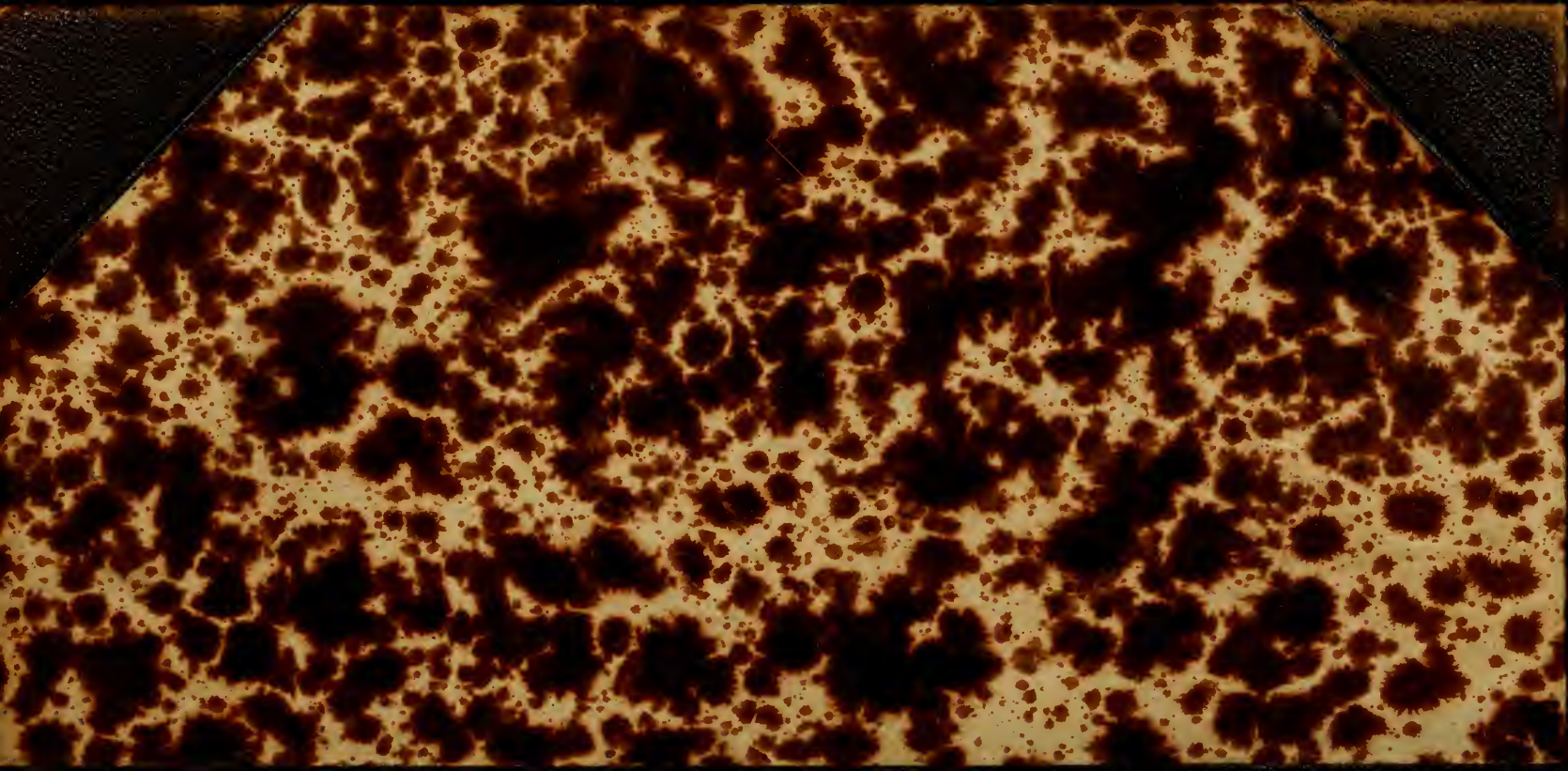

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VIEWS

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CONTENTS.

No. V.....Dr. Spring's Doctrine of Regeneration—The Christian Advocate's Doctrine of Depravity—Professor Fitch's Discourses and Reply on the Nature of Sin—The doctrine that God is the only Efficient Cause—Dr. Taylor's Sermon on the Nature and Cause of Sin.

No. VI.....Dr. Dwight's Views of the Cause of Sin—The Christian Spectator's Review on the Means of Regeneration.

No. VII.....The Biblical Repertory's Review on the Calvinistic Doctrine of Depravity—Considerations on the methods of conducting Benevolent Undertakings—Rev. E. R. Tyler's Sermon on the Preferableness of Holiness to Sin.

No. VIII.....The Christian Spectator's Review of Bellamy on the Permission of Sin—The Christian Spectator's Review of Dr. Woods' Letters.

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CONTENTS.

ART. I.—Dr. Spring's Doctrine of Regeneration, . 5

II.—The Christian Advocate's Doctrine of Depravity, ... 33

III.—Professor Fitch's Discourses and Reply on the Nature of Sin, ... 47

IV.—The Doctrine that God is the only Efficient Cause, ... 55

V.—Dr. Taylor's Sermon on the Nature and Cause of Sin, ... 84

DR. SPRING'S

DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION.

One of the most important objects at which a theological teacher should aim, is the acquisition of such views of religion and such a method of exhibiting them, as, from their harmony with each other and the dictates of common sense, are adapted to produce a strong conviction of their truth; such views as accord with fact, and such a presentation of them as to give them to bear on the conscience and heart with their natural and resistless force.

Such was eminently the character of the ministry of the Son of God. All his doctrines, injunctions, exhortations, and warnings, were such, and were presented in such a manner, as to carry along with them a demonstration of their truth and propriety. His hearers recognised the accuracy of the pictures which he drew of their obligations and guilt; the wicked trembled at the justice of his rebukes, and the penitent felt the reality and adaptedness to their wants, of the truths which he revealed and the promises which he offered for their consolation.

And such will be the character of every one's instructions, as far as they accord with the gospel. Truths are ever the same, and universally consistent with each other. They are facts, and all exhibitions of them will consequently harmonize with each other and the realities which they respect.

But any other than such a system of views must obviously, instead of gaining, be adapted to defeat its object. A course of instruction fraught with palpable and important contradictions, at one time inculcating views that overthrow the truths which it teaches at another, here subverting the foundation of the obligations which it there endeavours to enforce, and thence harassing the heart with temptations, instead of exciting it to obedience, must necessarily fail to a great extent of its end, and prove the instrument of multiplying in place of removing the obstacles to the salvation of men.

This fault, however, is apparent in no inconsiderable portion of the theological systems which prevail in the protestant church. Many of their important truths are obscured or overthrown by errors intermingled with them; and their doctrines, contradictory to each other and irreconcileable with revelation, consciousness, and reason, present strong temptations to unbelief, as well as inducements to obedience.

It were easy to verify this by a reference to several of the current doctrines and popular works of the day. A sufficient illustration of it, however, for the present occasion, is furnished by the doctrine of regeneration, as exhibited in "A Dissertation" on the subject, lately published by the Rev. G. Spring.

This is selected merely for its recency, not for any novelty or peculiarity of its views, or manner of exhibiting them. They are generally what are found in the current works on the subject, and often presented with much greater clearness and force.

The main doctrine of the Dissertation, in relation to which its others may be most conveniently considered, is, that the Holy Spirit regenerates the mind by an immediate or physical agency, wholly exclusive of the instrumentality of moral means.

"To say nothing of that class of scriptures which attribute the work of regeneration to the immediate efficiency of the Holy Spirit, the peculiarity of the following passages cannot have escaped our notice," &c. "As though he would impress the thought that holiness was the immediate effect of divine power in distinction from all other ways of producing it, John declares," &c. "We would hesitate in affirming with some most excellent men, that the principal reason why the immediate operation of the Spirit of God in the production of holiness is necessary, is found in any deficiency of intellectual capacity in unregenerated men, or any deficiency in the moral sense, or that this divine influence is necessary to make them moral agents, and to originate their obligations to piety. The principal reason why this influence is necessary is, that unregenerated men are enemies to God and holiness, and their hostility is so unyielding, that no light communicated to their understanding, no obligations addressed to their conscience, no motives presented to their hopes or their fears, can produce holy love." pp. 23—25.

This dogma, the reverse of the doctrine of the word of God on the subject, it is not my intention to undertake formally to refute. I shall employ myself rather in pointing out some of the difficulties which attend its adoption and inculcation, and in contrasting it in that respect with the opposite doctrine.

I. The first difficulty attending it, to which I shall refer, is, that it has no support from the scriptures.

Dr. S. speaks, indeed, of their being a "class of scriptures which attribute the work of regeneration to the immediate efficiency of the Holy Spirit," but has not designated any such, nor have any of the writers who have employed themselves in inculcating the doctrine;—and obviously because no such class exists. All the passages which relate to the subject, are employed in either simply stating the fact that God renews the mind, or that he renews it through the instrumentality of truth,—none in affirming that it is accomplished without the aid of means. Such at least I must regard as the fact, until I am able to discover, or the advocates of the opposite position to point out, some passage in which that is plainly inculcated.

The importance of this objection is too apparent to need illustration.

II. All efforts, consequently, to demonstrate it from the scriptures, are misapplications of the sacred word.

Such is most obviously the fact with the passages which Dr. S. quotes for the purpose.

"When Moses reminded the children of Israel of all the wonders of mercy and judgment, in which God had passed before them, *he took particular pains to inform them*, that all these had not availed to their regeneration. 'Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles; yet the Lord *hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.*" p. 24.

But this is plainly nothing more than a simple statement of the fact, that the means of regeneration had not in *that instance* been rendered efficacious. It does not affirm nor imply that they never are, and that regeneration is the effect of the "immediate efficiency of the Holy Spirit." To al-

lege it, therefore, as proof of that doctrine, is obviously as unauthorised as to derive from it any other inference. It no more follows from the fact that the means employed in that instance were not efficacious, that means are never instrumental to the renovation of the mind, and that it is regenerated solely by an agency wholly exclusive of them, than from the fact that the publication of the gospel is not in all instances productive of good, it follows that it is never of any service; or from the fact that some who enjoy the influences of the Divine Spirit are not renewed, it follows that his agency is never the cause of regeneration; or from the fact that means ever in any instance in the moral or physical world fail of accomplishing the end for which they are employed, it follows infallibly that they never have any instrumentality whatever. But to what conclusions should we be carried, were we to permit ourselves to reason on such a principle? The means of regeneration enjoyed in a certain instance were not rendered efficacious, therefore they *never* are! It will certainly follow then, and much more obviously, that no being is ever renewed; and thence that there is no such thing as regeneration. A more extraordinary misapplication of the word of God could scarcely have occurred.

His next quotations are of the same character.

"As though he would impress the thought that holiness was the immediate effect of divine power in distinction from all other ways of producing it, John declares of those who were adopted into the family of Christ, that they were 'born *not* of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*'" p. 24.

This passage however, simply affirms on the one hand, that the children of God are *not* born of certain things,

which confessedly are *not the means of regeneration;* and on the other, that they *are born of God.* In what manner then can it possibly, with any propriety, be employed to demonstrate the doctrine of the Dissertation? To infer from the fact, which it affirms, that the children of God do not derive their birth from certain things which are *not* the means of regeneration, that *those means themselves* have no instrumentality whatever in their renovation, is obviously erroneous to the last degree; and to infer it from the fact that they are born of God, is as plainly to run into the opposite mistake of assuming the very position which the argument is employed to demonstrate. The question is not whether it is God who renews the mind, or not, but whether he accomplishes that effect, or not, by an immediate efficiency wholly exclusive of the instrumentality of truth. What progress then is made in the determination of this question, by alleging the fact that it is he who renews the mind? Does the fact that a being causes an event, necessarily prove that he causes it by an "immediate efficiency," and not by the instrumentality of second causes? Does the fact that God saves "them that believe," demonstrate that he does not "save them by the foolishness of preaching," but by an "immediate efficiency"? Or is the fact that we are "born of God," any more to overthrow the doctrine of the scriptures that "of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*," and establish the opposite doctrine of the Dissertation, that that effect is not wrought by any such instrumentality, but is the result solely of an "immediate efficiency," wholly exclusive of means?

The next passage from the sacred volume which he employs to sustain his doctrine, has not even any relation to the subject of regeneration.

" Paul says to the Ephesians, that they were regenerated, not by that all pervading power simply which holds the universe in existence and sustains the uniform revolutions of the natural world, but ' by the *exceeding greatness* of that power which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.' " p. 24.

A recurrence however to the passage will show that it has no reference whatever to their regeneration, but in place of that, merely exhibits the apostle as praying that the Father *would increase their knowledge of Christ and his kingdom*—as a means undoubtedly of increasing their holiness—imparting to them just views of the nature of the hope to which they were called, and of the glory of the inheritance which was prepared for them, and of the power of Christ to advance them to its enjoyment, in the same manner as the Father had raised him from the dead, and " set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

" Wherefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

The apostle's prayer, that God would enlarge their knowledge of his truth as a means of continuing and increasing

their obedience, is thus alleged to demonstrate, that that truth has no instrumentality in giving birth to that effect, but that, on the contrary, "holiness" is "the immediate effect of divine power in distinction from all other ways of producing it."

These examples furnish a sufficient illustration of the misapplication of the scriptures in which the advocates of the doctrine are involved, in attempting to sustain it by their testimony. Yet the passages chosen by Dr. S. are undoubtedly as well adapted to the purpose, as any that can be selected.

How formidable an objection to the doctrine it is, that it cannot be attempted to be demonstrated from the sacred word, except by thus totally perverting its meaning, the reader cannot need to be told.

III. A still more important difficulty with which the doctrine is encumbered is, that it is directly opposed to the plain testimony of the scriptures on the subject.

Several passages of the sacred volume explicitly represent that God accomplishes the work of renovation by means of his word, and many others obviously imply that it enjoys that instrumentality. Thus it is announced to us, that Christ entered on the work of redemption with the purpose of employing the word to accomplish that end. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water *by the word*, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Accordingly he asked in his intercessory prayer, that their renovation

might be produced by that means. "Sanctify them through thy truth—thy *word* is truth." In conformity with this, the word, we are told, is actually assigned to that office, and that that effect results from its instrumentality. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "The sword of the spirit is the word of God." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And finally, in the following passages it is explicitly declared, that the individuals to whom they relate, were renewed by the instrumentality of divine truth. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God."

What clearer statements than these, that means are employed in the work of regeneration, can be expressed? And to these passages and the numerous others of a similar nature, thus taken in their natural and obvious meaning, what can Dr. S. oppose? Are there any passages in the sacred volume which formally teach the doctrine of the Dissertation, that regeneration is not accomplished by the instrumentality of truth, but is caused by an "immediate efficiency;" or that can authorize even a plausible argument in favour of that doctrine? There certainly are not. No proposition in the whole circle of erroneous theology is more obviously destitute of all legitimate authority, nor more palpably dependant on mere assumption and false

reasoning for all its show of support, than that dogma. If this grave asseveration is unauthorized, let it be refuted. If a single quotation can be made from the volume of inspiration fairly to demonstrate that doctrine, or an argument framed to support it, which is not either a mere assumption of it, or manifestly false in its conclusions, let it be made known.

IV. It presents false views of the nature of regeneration.

It plainly proceeds, and all the reasonings employed to sustain it, on the ground that the effect wrought by the immediate efficiency of the Spirit, is a mere change of the physical constitution, such as an eradication of some of its original attributes, or an introduction of others, to qualify it for the exercise of obedient actions. Why else is it held that moral means have no adaptation to lead to obedience? that their influence is necessarily against that result, and that a physical agency, wholly exclusive of their instrumentality, is requisite?

But it is easily demonstrable that if regeneration is produced by a physical agency, wholly independent of their aid, it must be a mere change of the physical constitution. For what is regeneration itself? It must undoubtedly be, either a change of the manner in which the being who is the subject of it acts, or else a change of the causes which determine the manner of his acting. But it cannot, according to the doctrine of the Dissertation, be a change of the manner of acting; that is, in other words, a commencement of acting right. For as, according to that doctrine, it takes place wholly independently of the instrumentality of moral means, it is, of course, produced independently

of *any perceptions* which as such means—that is, as *motives*—affect the voluntary powers. It is not in any respect the result of any *views* of any objects whatever in the understanding, nor consequently of any affections in the heart toward them. But men never *act*, and, of course, never change the manner of their acting, independently of perceptions—in other words, of motives—and affections toward them. It were absurd to suppose them to act voluntarily, independently of *any idea* of an object toward which to act, and influence from it as an inducement to action. To regard regeneration as the commencement of obedience or the exertion of a first right act, and still to suppose all instrumentality of motives to be excluded from the exertion of that act, is to suppose it to be exerted without any idea of the object, or being, or any affection toward it, to which the act relates! Could such an act—were it possible for it to be exercised—be virtuous, and constitute a proper qualification for pardon and acceptance with God?

All the statements and reasonings, however, of the Dissertation represent, that regeneration is not a change of the mode of acting, but the production in the mind of the cause of its acting in a new manner. If then it be the introduction into the mind of the cause of its beginning to act right, it must, according to the doctrine of the Dissertation, consist in a change of the physical constitution. For the cause of its acting in a new manner, must be either of a moral or physical nature; or, in other words, the reason of its beginning to act right, must be either that a different set of motives is brought to bear on it which leads it to exert the powers it before possessed in a new manner;—or

else, that a change is wrought in its physical nature by which the same motives produce a different result. But it cannot, according to the Dissertation, be a communication of new motives, as the doctrine itself of that work is, that motives have no instrumentality whatever in the change. It must therefore, to accord with that doctrine, be a change of the physical constitution by which the same motives produce different results.

What other views can be formed of the effect produced by the Divine Spirit, in any consistency with the doctrine of the Dissertation? He must surely be employed either in exciting the mind to exert—without any alteration of their nature—the attributes which previously pertained to its constitution; in other words, to exert *itself* in a new manner; or else, in changing its physical nature. But how can it be the first, in any compatibility with the scheme of the Dissertation? He certainly, according to that, is not employed in communicating views of truth to the understanding, as he produces the effect wholly independently of the instrumentality of truth; nor in presenting motives, that being expressly denied, and motives being moreover nothing but views in the understanding; nor thence, in exciting the affections, for they are never excited except toward perceptions; nor, consequently, in influencing the will—in other words, the voluntary conduct, as that is affected only through the medium of motives. To suppose, however, that he excites the mind to act without the use of any of these means, is to fall into the absurdity of supposing it to act without any perceptions, affections, or volitions; and that is, in other words, without any agency whatever.—

But if he does not excite the mind to exert the nature it before possessed in a new manner, his agency plainly must be employed in changing that nature. If the change wrought does not lie in the actions of the being who is the subject of it, what can be more manifest than that it must be in his physical nature that it takes place?

The doctrine therefore assumes, that the cause that men sin, lies in their physical constitution, and is such that no moral means can lead, or have any tendency to lead them to obedience; of course, that it is nothing less than a physical incapacity to obey, and consequently that regeneration is a change of that constitution, such as to render it capable of obedience; and there obviously is no tenable medium between the admission of all this, together with the whole train of terrific dogmas belonging to the same system which result from it, and the total abandonment of the doctrine of the Dissertation.

This dogma of constitutional depravity, thus involved in the theory of physical regeneration, is a most formidable incumbrance to it; being at once false in fact, and at war with all the doctrines of revelation—to which it has any relation—respecting the nature and conduct of men, and the character and agency of God. Of the obviousness of this, some illustrations will occur in the progress of this work.

V. It contradicts the doctrine of the scriptures and common sense, that men are antecedently to regeneration capable of obeying the gospel.

It would seem from the first sentence of the following quotation, that he felt some reluctance to advance a formal

denial of their ability to yield obedience, and yet, in the others he alleges what directly involves it.

"We would hesitate in affirming with some most excellent men, that the principal reason why the immediate operation of the Spirit of God in the production of holiness is necessary, is found in any deficiency of intellectual capacity in unregenerated men; or any deficiency in the moral sense; or that this divine influence is necessary to make them moral agents, and to originate their obligations to piety. The principal reason why this influence is necessary is, that unregenerated men are enemies to God and holiness, and their hostility is so unyielding, that no light communicated to their understanding, no obligations addressed to their conscience, no motives presented to their hopes or their fears, can produce holy love." p. 25.

No amount of means then, however great, which God can employ, can ever prove the instrument of exciting to obedience! But if such be the fact, the reason must plainly be, either that from the nature of the mind, means have no adaptation whatever to produce that effect, and this is the doctrine of the Dissertation; or else, which amounts to the same thing, that God is not able to employ a sufficient quantity of them to accomplish it. But to deny that means have any adaptation to produce that effect, is manifestly the same thing as to deny that the mind is *capable* of being excited by them to obedience; and that is clearly to deny that it is capable of obedience itself. In like manner, to deny the possibility of employing a sufficient quantity of means to produce that effect, is to deny their adaptation to produce it, and thence the mind's capability of being excited to it by their influence, and therefore absolutely its capacity of exercising it.

Such indeed is palpably, on the face of it, the import of the doctrine. How is it that it is impossible even for God

—while its nature is unchanged—to lead the mind to exercise obedience, unless it be that it is physically incapable of acting in that manner? Has he endowed it with a capacity which even he himself cannot call into exercise?—which lies beyond his control, and must until he changes its physical constitution? How is it that there is any necessity for a change of that constitution, if it is not encumbered with any incapacity or disqualification for obedience? or of what avail can such a change be? The idea of its necessity is obviously absurd on any other supposition, than that it removes from the mind an obstacle otherwise insuperable to its exercising obedient actions, and fits it to be naturally and easily influenced to exert them. The doctrine itself in fact of physical depravity—from which this theory of physical regeneration is derived—is, that the mind is incapable of holiness, that its nature fits it only for disobedience, and necessarily causes it to act in that manner. And such must necessarily be the fact with such a nature as that which the Dissertation ascribes to the mind. If it is such that no moral means can possibly induce it, nor have any tendency to induce it to exercise holiness, but necessarily produce the opposite effect, it assuredly must be because it has no capacity for acting in that manner. If while it remains the same, no means exist by which the effect in question can be produced, what can be plainer, than that it is incapable of being the subject or agent of such an effect, precisely as while no means exist by which it can create a world, it is obvious that the production of such an effect, lies without the sphere of its capacity?

The doctrine thus manifestly assumes, that men are ante-

cedently to regeneration, physically incapable of obeying the divine requirements, in the same manner as they are of performing miracles, or creating worlds; and thence contradicts the scriptures, which—concurring with the dictates of common sense—every where represent them as possessing, at that period, all the capacity they ever do, and all that is requisite, to a perfect compliance with the divine will. To teach it, therefore, is to teach, that to the unrenewed, all the duties enjoined by the Most High are absolute impossibilities, that his laws have no adaptation whatever to their nature, and consequently are not characterized in any degree by benevolence, wisdom, or justice.

VI. It is of course equally contradictory to the doctrine of the scriptures and the dictates of conscience, that men are, antecedently to regeneration, *under obligation* to obey the divine will.

That the sacred volume represents the unregenerate, as under the same absolute obligation as the renovated, to yield entire obedience to the will of God, is too obvious a fact to need to be demonstrated. And to suppose that they can be under obligation to exert actions of which they are physically incapable, is too gross an absurdity to require animadversion. To teach the dogma, therefore, is at once to contradict the doctrine of revelation on the subject, to falsify all the decisions of conscience, and to exculpate the impenitent from the guilt of their transgressions.

VII. It is wholly inconsistent with the fact admitted by him, that "there are means of regeneration."

That there are such means he thus readily allows :

"It is of some importance that our minds be satisfied that *there are means of regeneration appointed by God.* This sentiment is abundantly inculcated in the scriptures." "The scriptures uniformly represent the kingdom of grace as a kingdom of means. Though God himself renews the heart, it is not without the instruments and means of his own appointment.

"We have confirmation of this truth in the results of universal observation and experience. Apart from the regeneration of infants, so far as is known to us, God never regenerates the soul without means." p. 4, 5.

"The means which God has appointed for the regeneration of men *are many and various.* If we were to enumerate them, we should say, among the most important are, the holy scriptures, the christian ministry, the Sabbath, the worship of God in the sanctuary, the religious services of the family, social, private, and secret prayer, together with the religious education of children. Whatever, in a word, is adapted to arrest the attention of men to moral and spiritual objects, may be considered a means of regeneration." p. 8, 9.

All this, however, is wholly irreconcileable with his doctrine; as obviously, if that is true, none of these *are* means of regeneration, and no such means exist; for it formally denies that they either do or can exert any instrumentality to that end. "They do not change the heart." "Means cannot reach them." "No light communicated to their understanding, no obligations addressed to their conscience, no motives presented to their hopes or their fears, can produce holy love."

But if they never are used by the Divine Spirit to accomplish that effect,—if they have no capacity nor adaptation to produce it,—if their nature is such that they inevitably prompt to sin instead of exciting obedience,—if regeneration is a change of the physical constitution, and from its nature can be wrought only by divine power, wholly exclusive of means,—it is clearly improper to denominate the

truths of the divine word, or any instruments of moral suasion, "means of regeneration." Instruments without any instrumentality,—without a capability of any! Why denominate them causes from an effect, which they have no agency whatever in producing?—to which they are wholly incapable of giving birth?—whose existence their whole agency is employed in opposing? It is plainly only by a most loose and extravagant metaphor that they are called such. They are not, in fact, means of regeneration, any more than any other instruments, which lend no agency whatever to that effect, are. The pretence that they are, is wholly false and deceptive, a mere rhetorical flourish. They might be denominated creative, or preserving means, with as much propriety as means of regeneration.

The author of the doctrine in question is therefore embarrassed by the formidable difficulty in sustaining it, of offering at once a denial of his own and the doctrine of the scriptures, that "there are means of regeneration."

VIII. It represents that the truths of religion—in other words, just views of divine things—have no adaptation to excite obedient feelings. "No light communicated to their understanding, no obligations addressed to their conscience, no motives presented to their hopes or their fears, can produce holy love." p. 25.

Is such a doctrine, however, credible? Is it a fact that just apprehensions of the character, rights, government, and purposes of God, of obedience and sin, of the work of redemption, and the retributions of eternity, have no adaptation whatever to excite right feelings?—that a being who regards all these objects, precisely as they are, is no more

likely on that account to feel and act toward them as being such as they are?—that had Judas Iscariot, for example, had precisely the same views of God, of Christ, of the gospel, and all other subjects, which the Saviour himself had, they would not have had any adaptation to excite him to a better course of conduct?—that had the Jewish priests and rulers cherished identically the views of the character of the Saviour, his doctrines, and the object of his mission, which were afterwards entertained by the apostles, it could not have caused them to have felt or acted differently toward him?—that had Paul, antecedently to his conversion, had precisely those ideas, on the one hand of Christ and the gospel, and of his own conduct on the other, which were then imparted to him, he must still have regarded them with the same aversion, and himself with the same complacency?

The views, then, which men entertain have, it seems we are to believe, no influence on the nature of their conduct; or, in other words, the manner in which they act, does not result at all from the nature of the motives by which they are affected; consequently the nature and extent of their knowledge, experience, and belief, have no agency whatever in determining the nature of their conduct, and neither can be regarded as in any sense a cause of their acting in the manner they do, nor as presenting any indication of the course of conduct they will hereafter pursue! The differences in the feelings and conduct of individuals have no connexion whatever with any differences in their views and belief, nor have those of nations with theirs!

Such are the results to which the doctrine of physical depravity carries its disciples. Regarding the mind as having no capacity for any other moral actions than such as are sinful, they are thence necessarily driven to the inference, that no species of means that can be employed for the purpose, can excite it to any other kind of actions.

No one however, who reflects, can fail to perceive that this doctrine has no foundation in truth. Every one is conscious that he is determined in his conduct by motives; that he varies his conduct as his views change, and that had he at all former periods had the same views that he now entertains, he should have pursued the same course of conduct. I appeal to every Christian in the world, whether had he, antecedently to the period of his regeneration, possessed the same views of divine things which he now enjoys, the conviction is not irresistible that he should have exerted toward them the same affections as he now cherishes. And this conviction is sustained by the representations of the word of God, which every where exhibit men as determined in their conduct by the views which they entertain.

The views of Dr. S. on the subject, are thus at once intrinsically absurd, contradictory to all human experience, and subversive of the word of God.

IX. It involves him in the inconsistency of denying the representation which he has himself made, that the means of regeneration serve to "illustrate the obduracy of the human heart."

"Another object accomplished by the means of regeneration is, that they illustrate the obduracy of the human heart. The native tendency

of truth is to enter the heart; and were there no resistance, it would enter and prove the occasion of all holiness. But the heart reluctates and resists." p. 29, 30.

In this representation, he obviously assumes that these means are adapted and ought to influence men to obedience; and that it is owing, not to any defect on their part, but to a voluntary and criminal resistance with which they are met that they do not; and thence that an illustration is furnished by their ill success of the obduracy of the heart.

But his doctrine—which denies that these means have any adaptation to influence the mind to obedience—wholly debars him from the right of making that assumption, and thence of claiming that their not producing that effect, can furnish any illustration of the obduracy of the heart. If, as he represents, they have no tendency or fitness to excite to obedience,—if, from their nature, it is physically impossible that they should produce such an effect,—if the mind is constitutionally unsusceptible of being excited by means to right actions,—then plainly the cause of its not acting right, cannot lie at all in its own volition, but must exist wholly back of that, in its constitution;—must be a purely physical cause, wholly beyond the influence of the will.

The failure, therefore, of the means of regeneration to accomplish that end, furnishes no illustration of the obduracy of the heart, any more than would the use of any other means wholly unsuited to the production of such an effect; no more than the use of means to induce men to create a universe, could throw any light on the character of their hearts by its failure of success.

Could the inefficacy, at the present day, of the application of clay to the eyes for the purpose of removing blindness, or of bathing in Jordan for the cure of leprosy, illustrate at all the obduracy of the heart? And why any more can the use of means to *change* the heart, wholly unsuited to the end, furnish such an illustration?

X. It is equally irreconcileable with the doctrine advanced by him, that the failure of these means to renew the heart, illustrates the omnipotence of the Divine Spirit in accomplishing that effect. p. 32, 34.

If, as his doctrine represents, these means have no capacity, nor adaptation to produce that effect, how can their failure of success possibly throw any light on the nature of the cause that does produce it? How can the impotence of moral means illustrate the power of a physical cause? To talk, on his principles, of an exhibition of the omnipotence of the Divine Spirit, by the use of the means of regeneration, is as absurd as it would be to talk of illustrating the force of a revelation made in a known language, by the inefficacy of one written in wholly unintelligible characters;—is, in short, to talk of illustrating it, without an illustration.

In this representation also—forgetting his doctrine of the absolute inadequacy of means—he assumes that they are adapted and ought to produce a change of the heart, and that it is owing solely to a voluntary and criminal resistance of them, that they are not successful.

XI. It is equally inconsistent with the fact, admitted by him, that God uses these means, sincerely desiring that they should prove efficacious.

"Not only does he use means with them in great variety, but with *unfeigned sincerity and urgency.* All the means of regeneration are accompanied with the most solemn declarations of his desire that they may prove effectual. That they are no artificial measures, will appear to any one who reads the Bible." p. 9.

But if, as he teaches, these means are utterly unadapted to produce that effect, as absolutely so as any other means whatever, can it be that the Most High uses them with a *desire* that they should produce it? Does he desire impossibilities? Does he wish causes to produce effects, to which they are totally inadequate?—to exert powers which they do not possess?—that is, in other words, that in connexion with their agency, effects should come into existence without any cause whatever? The impropriety of such views is too apparent to need animadversion. It is not the part of a wise being to expect effects without causes, nor to desire powers to be exerted which do not exist. According to the doctrine of the Dissertation, however, it lies as entirely out of the region of adaptation and possibility, that the means of regeneration should prove the instruments of changing the heart, as it does that they should give existence to new beings or worlds; and it were, consequently, as irrational to expect or desire the one effect to result from their agency as the other.

XII. It is inconsistent with the fact, admitted by him, that men are under obligation to use these means as means of regeneration.

"If means of regeneration have been appointed by God, then are all who enjoy them under obligation to make such a use of them as will answer the end of their appointment." p. 10.

But the obligation to use them, as means of regeneration, must undoubtedly rest on the fact of their actually being such, and being appointed by God to be employed for that purpose.

If they are not such means, and have no adaptation to produce that effect, it is too apparent to need illustration, that no obligation can exist to employ them as such. There is no wisdom or virtue in deliberately using means for an end, for which it is known they have no adaptation whatever.

XIII. It is in like manner inconsistent with the fact, admitted by him, that men are under obligation to use the means of regeneration as such with others.

"There are then means of regeneration appointed by God, and we have great encouragement to use them with our fellow-men." "I see not why we have not just as much encouragement to use the means of regeneration with our fellow-men, as we have to actuate them in the common concerns of life." p. 36, 37.

The propriety and obligation, however, of thus using the means of regeneration, must rest on the fact of their being adapted to that end, and actually instrumental to its accomplishment. If they have no such instrumentality nor adaptation, there plainly can be no propriety in regarding and treating them as though they had. It is not the part of duty to seek, desire, or expect effects from means, which it is known they have no capability of producing.

XIV. His doctrine virtually sanctions the neglect—of which the impenitent are guilty—of the means of regeneration, as justifiable.

If his views of these means are correct, they manifestly treat them with no more neglect than they deserve. Indeed if, as he represents, they not only cannot be the means of leading them to holiness, but must necessarily—unless prevented by a supernatural interposition—lead them to greater sin, they act the part of wisdom in avoiding their influence.

XV. If the reasons for which he adopts his doctrine are legitimate, they should lead him to deny that means have any instrumentality in enlightening and convicting men, as well as in accomplishing their renovation.

"It is thus that the means of regeneration as used by God with unregenerated men, and as used by unregenerated men themselves, are connected with regeneration. They enlighten the understanding; they impress the conscience." p. 35.

But what better evidence is there that these effects ever result from the use of means, than there is that regeneration is accomplished through their instrumentality? The scriptures as clearly ascribe the illumination and conviction of men to the agency of the Divine Spirit, as they do their renovation, and as plainly show that means are not always efficacious to the production of these effects, as they do that after these are achieved, they often fail of accomplishing renovation. The connexion between the use of means and conviction, is no more certain nor clear, than between their use and regeneration. It is in the view of truth that men feel their guilt, and equally in the view of it that penitence, love, faith, and other holy affections arise in their hearts. If, therefore, the grounds on which he rests his

doctrine, that means are never instrumental to the renovation of the mind, are legitimate, they must necessarily carry him to similar conclusions respecting the illumination and conviction of men. He must, to be consistent, deny that means ever "enlighten the understanding," or "impress the conscience," as well as that they ever "change the heart." In fact, to avoid inconsistency, he must draw the same conclusion respecting the influence of truth after regeneration; as there is no more evidence of its efficacy on the mind subsequently to that event, than at the time when that change takes place.

His doctrine thus virtually involves the denial alike, that there are any means of sanctification, conviction, or even illumination, as well as regeneration, and refers all these effects to the "immediate" agency of God.

Such are some of the difficulties in which the author of the Dissertation is involved, in inculcating the doctrine of physical regeneration. It were easy to point out many others, scarcely less important; but the conclusions, to which they must carry us respecting its character, are already too apparent to leave any further discussion respecting them necessary.

It is affecting to reflect, that a doctrine so fraught with error, is thus mistaken for a doctrine of God, and inculcated as an inspired message that is able to make us wise unto salvation. How unlike is it to that revelation, the gift of his infinite knowledge, rectitude, and benevolence, sent down to call forth our reverence, confidence, and love, and win us to his kingdom.

And how unlike, in all these respects, to the doctrine to which it stands opposed, that the Holy Spirit renews the mind, through the instrumentality of moral means. No such difficulties embarrass the inculcation of that. On the contrary, it is sustained by the direct testimony of the scriptures, as is seen by the quotations which have already been made. It is consistent with all the other passages of the sacred word which have any relation to the subject. It accords with all that we learn from consciousness, observation, or the volume of divine truth, respecting the constitution, attributes, and operations of the mind; and thus, at once, consistently recognises our obligations, vindicates the rectitude of the divine government, and presents the strongest inducements to obedience, and the highest encouragements to labour for the salvation of our fellow-men.

Which then,—ministers of the gospel,—will you take on yourselves the responsibility of offering to your people, as the doctrine of God, and rely on as his appointed instrument to call forth to himself their submission and love?—that which, alike contradicting the decisions of revelation and common sense, exhibits him as "an hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed"—impeaching the rectitude of his administration—subversive of the obligations of men, and fruitful of temptations to rebellion, rather than inducements to obedience?—or the opposite doctrine, which entangles you in no such difficulties,—in which you are sanctioned by the clear voice of revelation,—by which, in assailing the conscience and heart, you are sustained by the consciousness

that you are using means adapted to the end, and appointed and employed by God for that purpose ; and finally, in the inculcation of which you may—and to be consistent must, as far as that can influence you—preach the gospel as it is, in its simplicity,—as apostles, and prophets, and the Son of God himself, preached it ?—doctrines as unlike—as "science falsely so called" and christianity—as pernicious error and the most salutary truth ? How momentous the responsibilities and results of your choice. May that revealing and renewing Spirit, the knowledge of whose word and agency you seek, preside over your decisions, and guide you into the truth.

THE

CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE'S

DOCTRINE OF DEPRAVITY.

The reviewer of Professor Fitch's Discourses in the Christian Advocate, has advanced several statements and arguments, on the subject of human depravity, which call for consideration.

Were regard had only to their deserts, neither the knowledge which they exhibit, nor the spirit by which they are characterised, could entitle them to notice. When prejudice and vanity unite their clamours, and attempt by mere abuse and dogmatism to overpower the voice of truth, it is ordinarily the part of dignity and wisdom to pass them in silence. It is only—as in the present instance—when a factitious reputation, the medium through which they are presented to the public, or other circumstances, threaten to give them influence, that it can become worth while to make them objects of serious animadversion.

In the reviewer's estimation—it would seem from the confidence with which he asserts his views and denounces

those of others—the subject has long been settled with all enlightened minds beyond controversy. Ignorance, weakness, and presumption, alone continue to doubt and disbelieve. There are some, however, who are not able to concur with him, and who regard themselves as entitled to the privilege of withholding their assent to his decisions, until they discover some evidences of their truth. I, for one, am so little satisfied with his views as seriously to doubt whether he is himself fully aware of their nature and the results to which they are adapted to carry him; and shall, therefore, make it the object of the present work to exhibit their import, and point out some of the difficulties with which they seem to me to be embarrassed.

He is then—as is seen from the following passages—an undisguised assertor of the doctrine of physical depravity, as defined in the earlier numbers of this work, and ascribed to the churches of this country and Europe.

"The single point in debate is, whether that *nature of the soul*, from which a continual succession of evil thoughts proceeds, is *sinful?* Here he denies and we affirm."

"Where there is a uniform failure of those exercises of love which the law requires, not only is there a fault in the deficiency of holy acts, but in that state or nature of the soul, which is the cause of this defect. And as we understand the scriptures, this corruption of heart, which is antecedent to its acts, and is the source of their evil, is often spoken of in the word of God."

"It is so generally admitted that a succession of thoughts or volitions, good or evil, must have a principle, or source from which they originate, that it is commonly assumed as a self-evident truth."

"What we assert, and what Professor F. denies, is, that *the causes of sinful choices*, which exist in the disposition, or temper of the soul itself, are *sinful.*" "The common belief of men is, that *the cause* of evil choices is *a moral corruption existing in the soul.*"

"We admit, indeed, that sin in the heart previously to action, is la-

tent, and that while it remains so, we can have no direct consciousness of it. But when by a succession of evil acts it betrays itself, we are as certain of its existence as of the acts of which we are conscious, and have no more doubt about the depravity of the principle than of the acts which proceed from it, just as when from a concealed fountain, poisonous streams issue, we are assured that the fountain itself is poisoned."

His doctrine thus is, that the "*nature of the soul* is sinful," and that the sinfulness of its nature is the cause of its sinful actions. Its import will more fully appear from a slight consideration of his terms.

To denominate a being sinful, is to ascribe to him worthiness of punishment. In the scriptures, when a being is denominated sinful, what is always meant is, that he is worthy of punishment *because of his actions;* but when the term is applied to a being's nature, the meaning is, that—apart from his actions—he has a worthiness of punishment *on account of his nature.* The reviewer uses the term in this sense obviously from the foregoing quotations, and from his stating that he is "conscious of a moral disapprobation" of his nature, and suffers "a great deal of pain and humiliation" on account of it. His meaning accordingly is, that the soul is worthy of blame and punishment, because its physical nature is such as it is, precisely as it is for its disobedient actions.

This worthiness of punishment consists—according to his representation—in the soul's being so constituted that its nature necessarily causes it to sin in all its agency; or, in other words, in their being a cause lodged in its physical constitution by which it is rendered necessary that it should exert sinful actions, and those only. "The cause of evil choices," he says, exists "in the soul" itself—not in its

circumstances, or the moral means which influence it; and we are made certain of its existence there and depravity by the acts which proceed from it: of course, therefore, it is in the nature or substance of the soul that it exists, not in its perceptions or actions which are its effects. It is one of its constituent "principles," as he denominates them—an original created attribute of its physical nature.

His doctrine then is, that the physical constitution of the soul is such that its own nature necessarily causes it to exert sinful actions in all its agency, and that, for being of such a nature, it is justly an object of disapprobation and punishment; and this is the doctrine of physical depravity.

On the reasons which he offers for the adoption of this theory, it is not necessary to dwell at length, both because of their nature, and of the able refutation which they have received from the author of the Discourses in his reply to the review: they are briefly the following.

First. He thinks so. "We think otherwise" than the author of the Discourses.

Secondly. Other people "think otherwise" also. "It is commonly *assumed* as a self-evident truth."

Thirdly. There are two or three passages of scripture which—by construing in direct contradiction to their obvious meaning and to the rest of the sacred volume—he thinks may be considered as favouring his doctrine.

Leaving him to answer what Professor Fitch has addressed to him on this subject, before offering any thing further respecting it, I proceed to point out some of the other difficulties which his doctrine involves.

I. It implies that men are physically incapable of exercising right actions.

Nothing whatever—according to his theory—exists in their constitutions which can possibly be a cause of such actions. Their only powers of moral agency are for the exertion of sinful actions. The exercise of right feelings and volitions is as much without the range of their capacity, as the production of any other effect to which they are physically incompetent. To suppose, therefore, that they can give birth to them, is to suppose that they can exert them without being able to be the cause of them; or, in other words, that those actions can be thrust into existence without a cause.

This dogma, however, every one who reflects on his consciousness must be aware has no truth in it whatever. At war with all human experience and the testimony of the scriptures, it is alike a reproach on our nature and its author.

II. Consequently it cannot be supposed, according to that doctrine, that God desires men to exert right actions.

It were to desire them to exert powers which they do not possess, to produce effects of which they are incapable of being the cause; and that were to desire effects to exist without any cause whatever. What, however, more irreconcileable with his infinite wisdom can be ascribed to him?

But while we are as certain that he does not expect or desire such physical impossibilities, as we are of his infinite knowledge and rectitude, we are equally sure that he desires men to exert the actions which he requires of them.

It is demonstrated by the requirement itself, and, to silence the cavils of men, is confirmed by his oath—"as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

The scheme of the reviewer is thus, in this respect, again embarrassed by a total irreconcileableness to all the convictions made on us by the government of the Most High respecting his wishes and character.

III. It involves the denial of God's right to require men to exert such actions as his law demands.

There is nothing in their nature, according to the doctrine of the reviewer, which can form a just foundation for claiming such a service. To ask it of them, is to ask them to produce effects of which they are physically incapable of being the cause; and is as unrighteous, therefore, as to require them to give existence to any other set of effects wholly without the reach of their capacity, and for which no cause whatever has any where an existence. And what stronger definition of an unjust government can be given, than that it demands of beings that effects shall exist without a cause? The character of the government is not affected at all by the nature of the impossible act required, whether it be a mere exertion of the moral powers, or the production of an external physical effect. So long as it lies wholly without the range of the being's capacity on whom the law is imposed, the thing required is equally unjust, whether it be the exercise of an affection, the exertion of a corporeal act, or the creation of a universe.

IV. In like manner the doctrine authorizes the conclu-

sion, that men are not blameable for their disobedience to the divine law.

There is no plainer dictate of common sense, than that no guilt can attach to beings for the violation of laws, requiring of them a service wholly surpassing their physical ability; that capacity for actions is indispensable to constitute an obligation to exert them. To suppose that blame may of right attach to men for not yielding a service of which their nature renders them physically incapable, is to suppose that they can be justly blamed because effects will not exist without a cause.

In teaching, therefore, that they are wholly incapable of exerting the actions which the divine law requires, as incapable, and in the same sense, as they are of raising the dead, or rendering themselves immortal, the reviewer has *virtually* taught that they are no more blameable for not giving birth to the one effect, than they would be for not producing the other.

V. His doctrine exhibits the attempt of the Most High to lead men to obedience by the influence of moral means, as irreconcileable with his wisdom.

Those means having no adaptation whatever to the production of the result, to use them is of course to waste their agency for nothing. It is pouring light on beings without eyes to cause them to see, and words on those who have no ears to induce them to hear. There is an absolute physical certainty beforehand that they must be totally inefficacious. They might as well be employed to elicit obedience from animals or inanimate matter.

But is the whole moral government of God thus nothing

more than a farce? Is he a trifler in imposing his laws, in calling on mankind to comply with them, in deploring and reproaching their rebellion, and universally in treating them as though these means were fitted and ought to lead them to obedience? Is what he denominates his vineyard, in truth, nothing but a naked rock or barren waste; and while he appeals to his creatures themselves, "what could have been done more, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked, that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" is the real reason of its unproductiveness, his never having done any thing whatever to it by which it could possibly become physically capable of being fruitful? When regretting their perverseness, he exclaims, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace"—"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,"—is it in truth all pretence, or at best nothing more than a wish that they would accomplish impossibilities?

How is the reviewer to answer these questions, except by abandoning his system? If—as his doctrine represents—mankind are not proper subjects for a moral government, why has the Most High attempted to exercise one over them? If there is no fitness whatever in moral means to sway them to obedience, why does he employ them for that purpose?

VI. It results in like manner from his doctrine, that all the efforts of men to lead the impenitent to obedience, by the influence of moral means, are utterly useless and unwise.

They are attempts to produce the effect by means which have no adaptation to it, and which there is a physical certainty beforehand can never be the instruments of its accomplishment. They might as well attempt, by their instrumentality, to convert the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air into worshippers of God. The dissemination of the scriptures is in vain,—the ministry is in vain, and all other means of imparting the knowledge and enforcing the sanctions of religion.

VII. His doctrine exhibits regeneration as a change of the physical constitution.

He pronounces this indeed "a strange notion of regeneration." "If" "the cause of evil volitions" "is a defect in the soul itself, then [regeneration] must be *a new creation of the soul as to its physical powers*, but surely this is a strange notion of regeneration." Yet the doctrine, that "a defect in the soul itself" is "the cause of evil volitions," is the very peculiarity of his system, for he affirms that it is a "sinful" "nature of the soul" "from which a continual succession of evil thoughts proceeds"; that "where there is a uniform failure of the exercise of the love which the law requires, not only is there a fault in the deficiency of holy acts, but in that state or nature of the soul which is the cause of this defect"; and that "the common belief of men is, that the cause of evil choices is a moral corruption existing in the soul."

"The cause of evil volitions" then being "a defect in the soul itself"—by his own decision, regeneration "must be a new creation of the soul as to its physical powers." And what—had he not made that decision—could be plainer,

than that, if the cause of the mind's sinning exists in its physical nature, the removal of that cause must involve a change of that nature? The reviewer, however, does not happen to perceive that his system is fraught with this formidable defect, but even advances it as a difficulty that fatally embarrasses the doctrine which he opposes!

From this point may again be seen the truth of the position, that the doctrine of physical depravity involves the denial of the ability and obligations of men and the rectitude and rights of God.

VIII. The children of God are, according to this scheme, no more praiseworthy for their obedience, than the unrenewed are blameable for their transgressions.

The actions of both are the result of mere physical necessity. It is nothing to the credit of the renewed that they do not sin; for no cause of such actions any longer exists in their constitutions; nor any more is it that they obey, such a change having been wrought in their physical nature that it necessarily causes them to act obediently. Effects resulting in that manner from purely physical causes, can no more subject them to a desert of good or evil, than can the circulation of the blood, the perception of images reflected on the eye, or any other similar physical events.

IX. Hence his scheme impeaches the wisdom and rectitude of the Most High in making the actions of men the ground of their rewards and punishments.

Their actions being—as his theory represents—wholly unavoidable, the mere results of physical causes, in the same sense as their perceptions of external objects, recollections, or involuntary motions are,—they can no more affect them

with any just desert of good or evil, than can any of these events. What ground can exist for any such discrimination as he makes between them? What more merit of good or ill can possibly directly pertain to them from the operation of one physical cause, wholly superior to their control, than from another? Our sensations of hunger and thirst, or consciousness of present perceptions and affections, and the memory of such as are past, might as well be made the grounds of our final destiny.

X. His theory requires him, in order to be consistent with himself, to believe that "a new creation of the soul, as to its physical powers," is wrought in every instance in which a change takes place in its conduct.

On the one hand, according to him, a corruption of the physical nature of the mind is the sole cause of its sinning: that corruption must of course, therefore, be supposed to exist within it in every instance in which it transgresses, as well after regeneration as before. On the other, a removal of that corruption—involving a change of its physical nature—is necessary in order to its exercising holiness. It must, accordingly, be supposed to be free from that corruption in every instance in which it exercises obedience. "A new creation of the soul as to its physical powers," therefore, must be believed to take place in every instance in which it changes its conduct from sin to holiness, or holiness to sin.

Can the reviewer find any thing in the scriptures, or his experience, to authorize this monstrous doctrine? "If men can please themselves with such philosophy and theology

as this, they are welcome to all the honour and gratification which their peculiar notions may obtain for them."

XI. His scheme exhibits God as the author of sin.—"The nature of the soul" itself—he holds—is "sinful," and sinful at the commencement of its existence. Its sinfulness, therefore, is a physical attribute, and, of course, the author of that nature is the author of its sin.

His system thus accords, in one of its most important features, with that of Dr. Emmons.

XII. His theory—if he adheres to the principles on which it rests—carries him to the conclusion, that the Creator himself is also depraved, in the same manner as he represents man to be!

He assumes that the production of sinful effects, demonstrates that the nature itself, which produces them, is sinful; and that, universally, causes must possess in themselves all the qualities which belong to the effects to which they give birth.

"To maintain that there is a cause existing in the soul from which all sinful volitions proceed, and yet that this principle has no moral evil in it, bears very much the appearance of a palpable absurdity. *It seems to us like saying that there is something, or rather every thing, in an effect which was not in its cause; which is the same as to say, there is an effect without a cause.*"

If then this assumption—on which his whole theory rests—is authorized, it must force him inevitably to the conclusion, that God himself is also depraved in the same manner as the mind is which he creates. He is the sole author of the mind,—and if its nature is sinful, is the sole author of its sinfulness. If, therefore, the production of a sinful effect

demonstrates that its cause is also sinful, and, if universally. causes must have in themselves all the qualities which exist in their effects, it follows incontrovertibly, that whatever sinfulness exists in the soul of man, must have its exact counterpart in the nature of God, and that every sinful act, therefore, which man exerts, presents as demonstrative evidence of the depravity of his Creator's nature, as it does of his own!

Such is the dreadful climax of the reviewer's system.

Which now—I appeal to the church and world to decide—is true; this scheme, which thus overthrows every truth of the gospel and involves these imputations on God; or the system—advanced in this work—to which it stands opposed?—or rather, for this is the question at issue, which is true—this system of absurd "science, falsely so called," of the reviewer; or "the gospel of the grace of God"?—for one or the other of them must manifestly be given up. They certainly are not the same, and as assuredly cannot consist with each other. If this scheme is true, it is as certain as is the truth of the scheme, that God is not such a being as the scriptures represent him, but is, in all his moral attributes, precisely the reverse; that his government is not what they claim it to be, but is the opposite of the justice, wisdom, and grace, which they ascribe to it; and that neither man, nor his obligations, are such as they are there represented.

To pretend that this scheme—discerning what it is—is the scheme of the gospel, were, I hesitate not to say, an outrageous farce, as palpably impious and inexcusable as

to pretend that the doctrines of idolatry, mahomedanism, or atheism, are the doctrines of the Bible. What can be more fearfully impious than to pretend that the scriptures authorize the belief that the nature of God is such as necessarily to cause him to sin in all his agency? Yet such is the fact, or this system entirely misrepresents them. Or to teach that God is the author of sin? Yet such is the fact, or this scheme is wholly erroneous. Or to claim that he has no right to require men to obey his laws, and does not desire them to? Yet such also is the fact, or this scheme is totally false.

I put it, therefore, to the conscience of the reviewer, whether he can with the least show of propriety claim that his doctrine is the doctrine of revelation, and justify himself to his Creator or fellow-creatures, for teaching it as such; and pray him to abandon it, and adhere to the scriptures as the guide of his faith.

I put it to the consciences of the ministers of religion, who hold and teach this system, whether, in inculcating it, they are not manifestly "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," and entreat them to pause in so deplorable a dereliction of their office, and return to the doctrines of God.

I put it to the consciences of their hearers, whether, in countenancing the inculcation of this system as the system of revelation, they are not sanctioning a most fatal perversion of the gospel, and implore them, as such, to reject and denounce it, and enforce its abandonment by their teachers.

PROFESSOR FITCH'S

DISCOURSES AND REPLY

ON THE

NATURE OF SIN.

These publications have high claims to the attention of the Christian public, both from the subjects of which they treat, and the able manner in which they are discussed.

The Discourses are employed in stating and demonstrating the doctrine, alike of natural and revealed religion—unhappily so generally overlooked or disallowed—that sin is an attribute of voluntary actions solely, not of the substance of the mind, as the dogma of physical depravity represents. The Reply is a vindication of that doctrine from the misapprehensions and objections of the reviewer of the Discourses in the Christian Advocate.

The considerations which Professor Fitch alleges in proof of the doctrine are, the fact that God expressly teaches it in the scriptures, defining sin as an attribute of voluntary actions; that, accordingly, in his moral government he takes

cognisance solely of those actions, requiring and prohibiting them only, and making them alone the grounds of rewards and punishments; that nothing occurs in his word but what is consistent with and corroborative of this; that the mind is so formed that it cannot feel blame for any thing but its voluntary acts; and that mankind universally act on it, in respect to each other, as a self-evident truth.

These facts, perspicuously and forcibly stated, present in the certainty with which they demonstrate the doctrine, a striking contrast to the reasonings advanced by the reviewer in vindication of the scheme which he advocates.

That writer does not pretend that he is authorized to adopt his theory by any passage of the sacred volume, explicitly affirming that the nature of the soul, as well as its actions, is sinful; nor that any of its requirements or prohibitions formally recognise any such sinfulness of nature; nor that its existence is directly perceivable by the mind itself. He confessedly has neither the clear voice of revelation nor consciousness to sustain him.

From what source then—groping without the aid of these important guides—does he derive his scheme? Not from any *known fact*, either revealed in the scriptures or ascertained by experience, but by *mere inference* from an *assumption*, and that the extraordinary assumption that mind as a substance and cause or agent, is governed by the same laws as matter!

This assumption he has not indeed formally set forth as the basis of his scheme, but has made it, and reared on it the whole superstructure of his theory, as undisguisedly as though he had announced it in so many words.

"We admit indeed that sin in the heart previously to action is latent, and that while it remains so, we can have no direct consciousness of it."

How then is it ascertained that any such sin exists? By assuming that the nature of the mind itself precisely resembles the actions which it exerts.

"But when by a succession of evil thoughts it betrays itself, we are as certain of its existence, as of the acts of which we are conscious; and have no more doubt about the depravity of the principle, than of the acts which proceed from it; just as when from a concealed fountain poisonous streams issue, we are assured that the fountain itself is poisoned; or when we find bitter or unwholesome fruit produced by a tree, although the nature of the tree is hidden from us, yet by its fruit we know that it is evil."

The acts of the mind then, according to this representation, participate and thence reveal the nature of its substance, in the same manner as portions of matter—as streams and fruits—partake and thereby make known to us the nature of the substance of which they are emanations!

This doctrine he indeed, in another place, announces in so many words in the assertion, that causes universally must have in themselves all the attributes which exist in their effects.

"To maintain that there is a cause existing in the soul from which all sinful volitions proceed, and yet that this principle has no moral evil in it, bears very much the appearance of a palpable absurdity. It seems to us like saying that *there is something, or rather every thing in an effect, which was not in its cause; which is the same thing as to say, that there is an effect without a cause.*"

This, then, is the sole foundation of his theory, and is to

be sustained, or the whole scheme fails. For if the acts of the mind are not portions of the mind itself, or, at any rate, precisely similar subsistences, just as streams are of their fountains, and fruits of their trees,—as his assumption is false, his inference from it, of course, is also,—that the mind itself has such an attribute, as he affirms, inhering in it, precisely, resembling theirs.

Is this assumption then authorized? Not by any thing which the reviewer has advanced. He has not, indeed, undertaken to vindicate it; nor could he, were he to attempt it. Whence can he derive any proofs of its truth? Certainly not from revelation, nor consciousness. Neither of these furnish any indications that the acts of the mind are portions of the mind itself, or similar existences. But is there any other source from which he can gather any information respecting it? And what—were he to his own conviction to vindicate his assumption, or gain from his readers an admission of its truth—is he, after all, to do with it, and the long crowd of corollories, wholly subversive at once of all revelation and experience, in which it would involve him? A worse predicament can scarcely be imagined than that in which his position, if authorized, would place him. Some of its incongruities and absurdities are thus happily ridiculed in the Reply.

"The very principle on which the supposition proceeds is absurd. It is this, that the cause must necessarily have the quality which exists in the effect; for it is supposed that nothing can pertain to a being which can in any way become a cause or occasion of sin, without its being on the very ground of sustaining such a relation, sin in itself."

"Admirable reasoning indeed; and the world must confess itself much indebted for the discovery of the wonderful axiom on which it

proceeds! A cause, forsooth, must contain in it the quality of the effect, otherwise there is an effect without a cause! My volition is the cause of bodily motion; is motion, therefore, contained in the volition? or is the motion without a cause? God has created matter; is, therefore, matter contained in God, or is it without a cause? Bodily appetite may lead one to a given purpose of evil; because the purpose is sinful, is bodily appetite itself so? Satan seduced Eve to prefer a forbidden good, and thus depart from God: because the preference itself was her sin, were the appetites of her nature, to which the tempter addressed his appeals, also chargeable upon her as her sin? If so, she was *always* a sinner. Satan and all rebellious angels *began* to sin; was it without occasion or cause that sin commenced, or if sin began to be from some cause, could there be sin in the cause itself, *before* sin began to be? Sin before there *was* sin? How is this? Sin cannot come into being from any cause, according to this writer, unless it exist *previously* in the *cause*. But as sin is in being, then, according to this writer, sin must have existed in its cause, and the sin pertaining to that cause must itself have had a sinful cause, and the sin of that cause a sinful cause preceding it, and so on for ever. According to this writer, therefore, sin has either existed from all eternity, or it has come into being without a cause. He is shut up to this dilemma."

Such is the contrast which the doctrine of the Discourses, with the proofs sustaining it, forms with that of the reviewer: the one, proclaimed by the clear voice of inspiration and consciousness, and corroborated by every part of the volume of revelation and experience;—the other, a monstrous figment of science falsely so called, alike alien to religion and human nature, and bearing on its own hideous features indubitable self-evidence of its erroneousness and folly.

Having thus demonstrated his doctrine, the author of the Discourses deduces from it several of the important truths closely connected with it, respecting the distinction to be made between the mind itself and its acts, and its acts and the reasons of their being exerted, the consequences of the

sin of Adam to his posterity, and our obligations; and still further illustrates and confirms them in the Reply.

The two works together thus present an able view of the doctrine of which they treat, and a successful vindication of it from the objections of its opposers, and their publication is a timely and important service to the cause of truth. The reviewer, indeed, thinks proper to doubt the utility of such discussions, because forsooth Professor Fitch has taken the liberty to differ from him, and to expose to the gaze of the world some of the errors and absurdities of his scheme. It is not expedient, it seems—he wishes his readers to believe—for theological professors and ministers to indulge inquiries respecting the nature of sin, unless they agree with him; and, above all, to introduce discussions respecting it into the pulpit, and endeavour to make their hearers acquainted with what they believe the scriptures teach in regard to it. A sentiment worthy of one who could offer to the world, as a doctrine of God, such a system as that of the reviewer.

It is not easy, however, to discover what theme Professor Fitch could have selected for a public discussion having stronger claims to his attention. The question itself is confessedly of the highest importance, affecting almost more than any other, by the views which are formed of it, every other branch of a theological system. What subject can it be important to us thoroughly to know, if not the nature of that evil and bitter thing, prohibited by God, which brings on us guilt and ruin? How are we to avoid sin, if we do not understand what it is?—if so profoundly ignorant of it as not even to know whether it is an attribute

of our voluntary agency, or of our created nature! How are we to comprehend our duty, or realize our obligations, if totally ignorant of our nature, which is the foundation of those obligations? How properly feel our need of the influences of the Divine Spirit, if wholly in error in respect to the nature and object of his agency?

And the subject is not only thus intrinsically important, but has peculiar claims to be made by him a theme of public discussion, from the misapprehensions of it which almost universally prevail. A witness of the extensive diffusion of these errors, and the fatal effects which they occasion, his responsibilities to God, his concern for the honour of religion, and the welfare of souls, his love of truth, imperiously require him to step forth and proclaim the doctrine of the gospel, in opposition to those false views, and invite back his fellow-men to the knowledge and belief of the truth. To stand an idle spectator, without an effort to make known what he believes to be the doctrine of God, and to vindicate his cause, were a most criminal dereliction of his duty.

On the whole, therefore, it is a subject of congratulation that Professor Fitch entertains the views presented in these discussions, and has given them to the public. He has thereby rendered a most important service to piety, benevolence, and happiness, as well as to truth; for the doctrine he has advanced is not only a doctrine of God, but is eminently fertile of propitious influences on the affections and enjoyments of those who embrace it, and of inducements to benevolent exertions for the salvation of others. The voices of righteousness, of peace, and of good

will to men, unite with that of truth in recognising and welcoming him as their friendly promoter in this enterprise, and in invoking him to continue his labours until the knowledge and belief of this important branch of the gospel shall universally prevail, and give birth as universally to those just affections toward God and men, which appropriate views of them alone can inspire.

THE DOCTRINE

THAT

GOD IS THE ONLY EFFICIENT CAUSE.

The most numerous and important errors in theology which have gained a prevalence in the church, have related to the natures and agency of God and man. Overlooking in their inquiries on these subjects, or misapprehending the lights which consciousness, reason, and revelation furnish, and yielding to the sway of imagination and the guidance of inapplicable analogies, men have contented themselves with plausibilities in place of facts, and constructed innumerable theories, and made them their standards in the interpretation of the volume of inspiration, utterly unsupported by that word, and subversive of its most essential truths. Thus, at one time, they have advanced schemes involving a denial of the attributes of the Supreme Being, the divinity of the Saviour, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the divine agency in preserving and governing the material and intellectual worlds; or misrepresenting the

nature and object of that agency. At another, their systems have withheld from man the most essential attributes of his being, or ascribed to him others incompatible with his constitution and subversive of his obligations. One has exhibited God as an arbitrary tyrant, calling his creatures into existence to be crowned with happiness or consigned to misery, as caprice or interest dictate, without regard to their rights or character. Another has delineated man as a fit subject for the sway of such a despot,—a mere machine, without power, volition, or responsible agency, and indebted for all his actions to an external force.

The extravagances of one system have thus given birth to those of another, until error seems to have exhausted all the shapes it can assume. The doctrine of Augustine called forth that of Pelagius; Calvinism produced Arminianism; Jansenism opposed itself to Jesuitism; and all these, perhaps, exerted an agency in producing Socinianism, Unitarianism, Deism, Fatalism, and the numberless and shapeless errors which have overrun the churches of the European continent, or introduced themselves into other sections of the Christian world.

Of the various theories which have been promulgated on these subjects, no one that has obtained any prevalence in this country, has exceeded in folly and extravagance, that which exhibits God as the sole efficient cause in the universe. This extraordinary system seems first to have suggested itself to Dr. Hopkins. It assumed a more definite shape in the speculations of Dr. West, and has finally been sent forth, in its perfected state, in the discourses of Emmons and several others.

This theory is presented in the doctrine that God creates all the actions of mankind, in the same manner as he gives existence to mind and matter, by his almighty fiat.

The following quotations from one of these writers furnish a sufficient exemplification of the language and manner in which it is taught.

"Since all men are dependant agents, all their motions, exercises, or actions, must originate from a divine efficiency."

"The heart may be created as well as the understanding, or moral exercises as well as natural faculties. It appears from what has been said, that the hearts of saints are created, or that their free and voluntary exercises are the production of divine power."

"It is agreeable to the nature of virtue or true holiness to be created. Holiness is something which has a real and positive existence, and which not only may, but must be created."

"It is sometimes proper to ascribe men's good actions *wholly* to God, and sometimes equally proper to ascribe their bad actions wholly to him. We may justly conclude, that the divine agency is as much concerned in their bad as in their good actions."

"Men are no more capable of acting independently of God, in one instance, than another. If they need any kind or degree of divine agency in doing good, they need precisely the same kind and degree of divine agency in doing evil. This is the dictate of reason, and the scripture says the same. It is God who worketh in men both to will and to do in all cases without exception. He wrought equally in the minds of those who sold and in the minds of those who bought Joseph. He wrought as effectually in the minds of Joseph's brethren, when they sold him, as when they repented and besought his mercy. He not only prepared these persons to act, but *made* them act. He not only exhibited motives of action before their minds, but disposed their minds to comply with the motives exhibited. But there was no possible way in which he could dispose them to act right or wrong, but only by *producing* right or wrong volitions in their hearts. And if he produced their bad as well as good volitions, then his agency was concerned *in precisely the same manner in their wrong as in their right actions.*" Emmons.

These boasted claims of the scheme to be received as a

doctrine of reason and revelation, I propose briefly to examine.

I. The first remark I shall make in regard to it is, that it carries on its face the most decisive marks of improbability.

Like the doctrine of metempsychosis, the non-existence of matter, and astronomical vortices, it strikes the ear at once, as chimerical and false. No evidences of its truth are apparent to consciousness or observation. No medium is perceptible, by which its certainty can be discovered. It is felt irresistibly, that if capable of being demonstrated, it must be by some new and extraordinary step, unknown in the common range of our speculations, and remote from our ordinary methods of acquiring knowledge.

II. All the arguments, founded on the word of God to support it, are assumptions of the doctrine which they are employed to demonstrate.

No one who has read the volume of inspiration can need to be told, that no such doctrine is *expressly* taught on its pages;—that, if inculcated there at all, it must be by the most remote and questionable implication. Its propagators do not indeed pretend that it is directly presented in the scriptures. They derive it only by inference from other doctrines, or from isolated declarations respecting the agency of God, or the nature and relations of man. Of the passages which they allege as furnishing ground for that inference, the following, respecting the dependence of men on God, their subjection to his providential and moral government, and subservience to his will, will serve as examples.

"In him we live and move and have our being. The way

of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will. It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."

But these passages say nothing whatever of God's giving existence to our actions by his creating energy. They simply state, that he upholds us in existence, that his providential control extends to all our circumstances and actions, and that his spirit influences us to obey his will. This is too plainly the fact to be either denied or overlooked: and the ground accordingly on which they are alleged as proof that he creates our actions is, not that they affirm it, but that that is the only method by which he can produce these or any other effects in us. "There was no possible way," says the writer quoted above, "in which he could dispose them to act right or wrong, but only by *producing* right or wrong volitions in their hearts." But in assuming this ground, they take for granted all which they attempt to prove, and their whole pretended argument from scripture is thus nothing but an undisguised assumption of the doctrine; a mere round assertion of it, unaccompanied by a shadow of proof; and all their array of quotations from the sacred volume, under the semblance of argument, serves no other purpose than to throw over their decision an air of divine authority. It must be demonstrated from other

sources, that God cannot or does not influence the conduct of mankind, in any other way than by creating it, before these passages, which merely affirm that he *influences* their agency, can be alleged as proof that he creates it.

But—it will, perhaps, be asked—may not the position thus assumed after all be correct, and capable of vindication? On what ground can it be sustained? Not surely on that of intuitive certainty. It cannot boast of any marks of self-evidence. No proposition in the whole mass of human opinions has less claim to that character; and merely to *assert* its self-evidence, were only again to repeat the assumption of it. Nor can it on the ground that God has affirmed its truth. Nothing of that character can, with the least shew of evidence, be ascribed to his word. But there are no other sources from which any proofs of its truth can be derived. Nor is that the only difficulty with which it is embarrassed. If *God* cannot influence the conduct of men, except by creating their actions, it must be still more preeminently true that *creatures* cannot affect the agency of each other, except it be in that manner. What conclusions, then, respecting their agency are we to form, when we are told that David "bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man"—that "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin"—that "the Devil put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus"—that "Satan filled the heart" of Annanias "to lie unto the Holy Ghost"?—That they *created* these effects, or are these passages to be set aside as without any meaning whatever? Certainly one or the other, according to this theory; for they must either have created those effects, or—as according to the

position assumed, there is no other possible way in which they could have been produced—they did not produce them at all; and the ascription of them to their agency, is a mere rhetorical flourish, without a shadow of truth or significance.

Neither the scriptures then, nor any of these arguments which its doctrines are wrested to sustain, furnish the teachers of this theory any authority for its inculcation.

III. Of the same character are the philosophical arguments employed for its support.

The following, from the same author, furnish a sufficient exemplification of them.

"It is the dictate of right reason that no created being is capable of acting independently. Universal and absolute dependance goes into the very idea of a creature, because independence is an attribute of the divine nature, which even omnipotence cannot communicate."

"We cannot conceive that even omnipotence is able to form independent agents, because this would be to endow them with divinity. And since all men are dependant agents, all their motions, exercises, or actions, must originate from a divine efficiency."

"Since mind cannot act any more than matter can move without a divine agency, it is absurd to suppose that men can be left to the freedom of their own will to act or not to act independently of divine influence. There must be, therefore, the exercise of divine agency in every human action, without which it is impossible to conceive that God should govern moral agents, and make mankind act in perfect conformity to his designs."

The premises, however, of these pretended arguments, are plainly nothing but so many mere assertions, that God cannot impart to creatures the power of acting of themselves,—on the ground, that it would be to communicate an attribute of the divine nature, and render them independent of his control,—assertions unblushingly assuming the

whole question at issue, and not attempted to be sustained by even a semblance of evidence. Yet these are the arguments of which the disciples of this theory so loudly vaunt, as irresistibly demonstrative of its truth, and imposing on us an obligation to receive it as a fundamental doctrine of theology.

It is undoubtedly, to them, a convenient, and, it would seem, a satisfactory method of settling the question, in this manner to lay down these formidable propositions as self-evident truths, and thus, at once, to dispense with all proof and discussion respecting it. Flattering themselves, perhaps, that the Most High has created them, and their belief of them, in their minds, they have allowed themselves to expect that he would create them in like manner, and a conviction of their truth, in the minds of their readers also, and thereby supersede the necessity of efforts on their part to demonstrate their truth. If such have been their expectations, they have, at least as far as I am concerned, allowed themselves to be mistaken. They have undoubtedly fallen into an equal error, if they have permitted themselves to believe, either that their readers have sagacity enough to perceive that their propositions are true, without any *evidence* of it; or credulity enough to embrace them without proof. Those who realize the value of truth, the dangers of error, and the responsibility of adopting and promulgating false views as revelations from God, will require something more than the confident assertions of their fellowmen, to satisfy them of the propriety of recognising such theories as the doctrines of his word.

But can these writers demonstrate the truth of the asser-

tion—on which their argument is thus suspended—that God cannot impart to creatures the power of acting of themselves? They most assuredly cannot. Whence can they derive any evidences of its truth? Not from the nature of the subject itself, nor from the volume of inspiration. How can they have acquired any such proof? Have they by searching so found out God, as to have discovered a limit beyond which his omnipotence cannot go? Have they so mastered the knowledge of intellectual being, as to have ascertained that the communication of power is impracticable? There is surely nothing apparent in the nature of that, incompatible with its being communicated, any more than of understanding, affection, memory, or any other attribute of an intelligent being. It is no more an attribute of *the divine nature*, than they are, and no more ground exists for questioning the possibility or fact of its communication to created beings, than for denying the communication of them.

But their assumption carries its refutation with itself. Let them assert on the subject whatever they may choose, it remains a certain and palpable fact, that God *has* imparted to men the power of acting of themselves. That they possess that power, and exercise it in all their actions, their actions themselves, and their constitutional and irresistible conviction that they exert them by their own power, are incontrovertible proof. They have as much, and indeed the same certainty—their instinctive conviction of it—that they are the efficient causes of their actions, as they have that they exert the actions themselves. They universally proceed on this conviction in their intercourse with each other; and are sanctioned in it by all that God has taught

on the subject. It is on this ground that they regard themselves and others as responsible for their conduct, and employ means to influence the agency of each other; and on this ground that God ascribes their actions to them, in the same manner as his own agency is ascribed to himself; employs the means of his moral government to control their agency, and finally holds them responsible for the effects they produce. What but consummate folly were the efforts of men, by laws and persuasions, to control each other, were not such the fact? or what better were the measures employed for the same purpose by the Most High?

Of the same character is the assertion, that the possession of power by creatures is incompatible with their subjection to the divine control. The only allegation advanced in support of this position is, the wretched pretence that by the acquisition of power, they would escape the necessity of being governed in their agency by the influence of motives. That, however, would plainly be to cease to be *moral beings*, as no moral agent can act independently of motives. But if power in one being is thus necessarily incompatible with morality, it must of course be equally so in every other. Their assumption thus precipitates us, at a single step, to the conclusion that *God* is not a moral agent, and of consequence that neither holiness, justice, goodness, truth, nor any moral excellence, is an attribute of his character! Ignorance, capable of offering such representations as the dictates of reason and revelation, is scarcely worthy of a formal refutation.

So much for the arguments—for these are all they have ever advanced—which the teachers of this monstrous

scheme have employed to support it. If they have lacked reason, they certainly have not shown any deficiency of courage, in venturing to rear so huge a superstructure on so slender a basis, and to send it forth to the world, as challenging from the authority of their declarations and its own intrinsic certainty, an unhesitating acceptance as a revelation from God. But it is not the only objection to this system that it is thus unsupported by evidence. It is embarrassed by still more formidable difficulties, which I shall proceed to point out.

IV. It contradicts the testimony of our consciousness in regard to the origin of our actions.

I take it to be a tolerably well ascertained fact, that we are voluntary beings, and exert all our moral actions from choice. Yet this new doctrine which is to supersede all our erroneous ideas in regard to ourselves and our Creator, and introduce us to exact views of intellectual being, is in truth nothing more nor less than a flat denial of this fact. For what is it to exert an act voluntarily? Plainly nothing else than to be the efficient cause of it. The terms are precisely co-extensive, and it is as rank and insolent an absurdity to deny the applicability of the one, as the other, to our agency. The very peculiarity of our voluntary actions, by which they are distinguished from all other events of which we are the subjects, is, that we exert them *of ourselves*, in place of their being produced in us by external causes. And what higher, or other conception than this, can we possibly form of efficiency? What can it be to be the efficient cause of an act, unless it be to exert it of *one's self?* Or what more than this is there in the universal

conception and definition of voluntary agency? We are undoubtedly as conscious that we exert our voluntary actions ourselves, as we are that they take place within us, and as certain, therefore, that we are their efficient causes, as we are that either they or ourselves exist. All this, however, is undoubtedly of small consideration in the eye of these metaphysical empirics. Armed with the all-mastering conviction that God himself has created their doctrine, —and their belief of it,—in their minds, and regarding that perhaps as decisive evidence of its truth, the slender testimony of consciousness and common sense to the contrary, is of course of small avail with them.

V. The doctrine denies that man ever sustains, or is capable of sustaining, the relation of a cause to an effect.

If he possesses no power whatever, he of course produces no effects, but is as completely alien to the relation of a cause as though he had no existence. Not a solitary event in the whole history of human affairs, owes its existence to him, or can be ascribed to him as its cause, without the grossest injustice both to him and to its real author. As well might the creation of the universe be ascribed to the universe itself, or the praise be given to man himself of the contrivance and formation of his nature.

This will undoubtedly to most readers be quite a new fact in their history, and some surprise will be felt that it had never before come to their knowledge. It is certainly most extraordinary that so palpable a fact—as palpable it must be, if it be a fact—should have so long escaped the observation of mankind; and is greatly to be regretted, considering the grievous errors into which their ignorance of it

has led them. Nothing is more certain, than that they have universally regarded themselves as the real causes of their voluntary agency. It is on this conviction that their consciences have proceeded in the approval or disapprobation of their actions, that they have held themselves responsible to each other and society for their conduct, and that God has claimed, and they have acknowledged, their responsibility to him. It is the basis of all obligation, of all feelings of approval and blame, of all requirements and prohibitions, rewards and punishments, both in all human administrations and in the government of God. The idea of imposing laws on beings who have no power to exert the acts required,—of making them responsible for effects of which they are not the cause, is preposterous to the last degree. What but the extreme of injustice—if such are their relations to our nature—are all laws human and divine? What a stupendous system of oppression is the government of God? And what a mass of cruelty have the lawgivers and rulers of the world inflicted on their fellow-creatures?

Is such, then, their character—or is this doctrine false? How are these theorizers to extricate us from this dilemma? Shall we reject their doctrine; or shall we, on the authority of their mere assertion, give up at once all our natural views of right and wrong, our consciences, our obligations, our laws, our regard for the common sense of each other, and our confidence in the rectitude and wisdom of our Creator?

VI. According to this doctrine, the motives under which we act, are never the instrumental cause or reason of our

acting in the manner in which we do, and have no influence whatever on our conduct.

Our voluntary agency not being—according to this scheme—originated by ourselves, nor any thing within us, but produced by the divine efficiency, that efficiency is of course the sole cause that it exists, and that its nature and mode of existence, or relations to other events, are such as they are. Nothing in the nature of our perceptions, or the other events which take place within us, which are motives to us, nor in the fact that they exist in our minds, has any thing whatever to do with our exerting the affections and volitions toward them which we do, nor lays any foundation for the certainty that any such affections and volitions, or any voluntary agency whatever, is to be exerted toward them. They sustain toward each other no other relation than that of proximity in the order of existence,—of antecedents and consequents. No necessity for the existence of the voluntary agency, arises from the existence of the motives which are the objects of that agency. The whole series of motives might exist in the mind, without there ever being an affection or volition exerted toward them, and they actually have no more influence on our voluntary agency, than they would if no such agency were ever exerted. Their connexion is wholly arbitrary; the immediate result of the sovereign act of God.

In what an abyss of error are we involved, if this scheme is true! What a maze of folly are all the attempts of men to sway the conduct of each other by knowledge, persuasions, laws, rewards and punishments! How deceived have teachers, orators, lawgivers, rulers, and men in every rank

in society, been; in the impression that their agency has exerted an influence on the conduct of their fellow-men; and what but a deceptive pageant is the government of God?

Here again—as in the former case—the theory involves a denial that we are voluntary beings, and reduces us to mere machines,—as it is not more certain that we do not and cannot act without power, than it is that we neither do nor can exert volitions without the inducement of motives. But if we are to be subjected to the disposal of these writers, their theory warns us that a still more ignominious and fatal doom awaits us.

VII. We have no certainty nor probability—according to their views—of the existence of any material object.

As God—as they represent—creates all our perceptions of these objects, their existence in our minds, of course, is not the consequence at all of the objects themselves actually existing without us, and is therefore no evidence whatever of their existence. If there actually are such objects, they have no connexion with our perceptions of them, and those perceptions form no ground for inferring their existence. Nor is our constitutional and unavoidable belief, that they have a real existence, any evidence that such is the fact; as that is not any more than our perception of them, an effect of the objects themselves, but results directly from the divine efficiency.

Instead of being a plain matter of fact, the world is thus literally "a fleeting show for man's illusion given." The heavens, the earth, the loved scenes of our residence, our friends, the whole crowd of beings with whom we are main-

taining the struggle of life, our very flesh and blood which we are toiling to protect, nourish, and adorn, are mere phantasms, as unreal as the fanciful beings that people our most delirious visions. All the distinctions which we are accustomed to make between realities and the creatures of imagination, between history and fiction, are unauthorized and illusory—or else this theory is false.

VIII. It cuts us off from all certainty of our past existence.

As, according to the scheme, all our mental operations, whether of consciousness, the perception of external objects, memory, or volition, owe their existence and nature to the direct act of God, the fact that they exist and are such as they are, manifestly furnishes no evidence whatever that we have before been the subjects of any of the events to which they seem to relate. The cause of our acts of memory, for example, is not at all that such events, as are the subjects of recollection, have ever taken place—even if it be a fact that they have occurred—but is the divine efficiency solely. Our recollections consequently are no evidence whatever of the previous existence of the events to which they refer. Nor, for the same reason, is our natural belief of the past existence or occurrence of those objects or events, any such evidence, as that is owing, not to that existence, but to the same supernatural cause.

But thus cut off from all evidence of our past existence, from consciousness, memory, and our constitutional belief of it, we have no evidence of it whatever, and have consequently no rational ground to regard it as a fact. Hence we have no certainty that we have exerted the acts, which

we regard as evidences of piety or guilt, and no ground therefore, either to entertain hope of acceptance, or fear of condemnation with God, on account of any past agency. We have no evidence, either that we have ever obeyed or transgressed the divine law, or have any moral character whatever. For the same reasons, we have no ground to anticipate a *future* existence. Having no evidence of a past being, we have no materials for an idea of a continued one; or, at any rate, as our present mental state is all that we are certain of, we have nothing but that from which to reason in regard to futurity; and that state itself obviously cannot furnish any ground for a decision one way or another.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that, according to this, the scriptures are false in their records of past events, and predictions of such as are to come. There is not a particle of evidence that any such beings as past generations of men ever existed, that a Saviour ever came into the world or had a being, that prophets and apostles preached his gospel or existed, that men have ever been sanctified and pardoned, or had a being to be the subjects of such events, that even God has ever revealed himself to creatures, or given any evidence of his being. In short, the whole series of events, recorded in the Bible, is a fable. There are no such things as past events, history, knowledge, experience. The present moment comprises the whole circle of realities.

IX. In like manner it cuts off all evidence of the existence of our minds.

Neither our consciousness, as it represents, nor any of

our mental operations, being *caused* by our minds—if we have them—but being the direct productions of divine power, they cannot constitute any evidence of the existence of our minds, nor furnish any ground for the inference that they exist. *These* effects of a divine cause can furnish no indication of the existence of *such* a species of effects, any more than of any other; any more than of the existence of the external objects to which so many of our acts relate. We are left on precisely the same ground in regard to evidence that we possess minds, that we should occupy if none of these effects were created in us.

The mind being—as this scheme teaches—totally destitute of power, can never possibly furnish an indication of its existence. Invisible itself, and incapable of producing any effect which can form a ground for inferring its existence, its existence must inevitably remain unknown to itself, as well as all other beings, like the existence of those forgotten beings in past ages that have ceased to be.

But it is time to turn from these philosophical objections to the theory, to such as are furnished by its contradictiousness to the scriptures.

X. The views of mankind, and their agency, presented by this theory, are totally contradictory to those which God exhibits of them, in his providence and moral administration.

It will be admitted by all, that God regards mankind as being precisely such creatures as they really are, and adapts all the measures of his administration to their nature;—that he does not ascribe to them an existence which they do not enjoy, nor attributes which they do not possess, nor

require them to produce effects of which they are incapable of being the cause, nor employ means to produce effects in them, utterly unsuited to the accomplishment of such ends.

But it is equally unquestionable, that he does not exhibit such views of them, as this scheme presents. He does not conduct toward them as though they had no agency, no attributes, no susceptibility of influence from motives, no efficiency, no existence even whatever, but in all these respects represents and treats them as real beings, precisely such as they regard themselves. What higher testimony could he give to the fact that they are actual existences, possessing efficiency to produce effects, than by so arranging his providence as to make their continued existence and happiness, to depend on effects to be produced by themselves; and by establishing over them a moral government, on the one hand, expressly requiring them to produce certain effects in a continuous series, and effects of the highest import, that are to constitute their character, to gain a record in the everlasting memorials of his government, and exert an endless influence on himself and his kingdom ; and on the other, by forbidding their giving existence to certain other effects equally important in character and influence on their destiny? What stronger proof could he furnish that mankind are the efficient causes of their voluntary actions, and governed in all their agency by the influence of motives, than by founding his moral government on that fact, and employing motives, and no other means, to induce them to exert a right course of action, and restrain them from a wrong? Or what further testimony could he add to all this, than by

holding them responsible for the actions which they exert, and rewarding them with everlasting life, or punishing them with everlasting misery, according as they obey or rebel?

He treats them in the same manner in all his representations of their nature, ascribing to them as real an existence and agency as he does to himself, and exhibiting the exertion and desert of their actions as belonging to them, in the same sense as his own do to him.

To all these palpable truths of the word of God, however, the representations of this theory are, as has been seen, flatly opposed. They are, therefore, false.

XI. It contradicts the representations of the scriptures, respecting the intervention of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of influencing the conduct of mankind.

The scriptures every where exhibit that intervention, as a peculiarity of the administration of the Most High, superadded since the fall to the natural means of his moral government for the purpose of rendering them effectual, and as vouchsafed in different degrees, at different periods, and to different individuals. Thus men are taught to desire and invoke his influences, and forbidden to grieve and resist him, and all their obedience is represented as the fruit of his agency. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

But this doctrine, presented in every page of the sacred volume, is utterly irreconcileable with the theory. There is no room, according to that, for any such intervention of the Spirit. If *all* the actions of mankind are created by the Most High, it cannot constitute a peculiarity of his administration that that particular class, which is in conformity to his law, is called into existence by his agency.

The scriptures, moreover, exhibit the Holy Spirit as enlightening and sanctifying men through the instrumentality of moral means. Their language is, "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." "Sanctify them through thy truth." "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." But this is, in like manner, wholly incompatible with the doctrine of the theory; as manifestly, if God *creates* all the actions of men, these second causes can have no instrumentality in calling them into existence.

XII. In like manner, it is wholly at variance with the doctrine of the scriptures, that the adversary exerts a moral influence on mankind.

If God creates all the effects of which men are the subjects, no argument can be required to show that none of them can be produced by the adversary. Besides, if he like all other creatures—as the theory represents—is totally destitute of power, he is, of course, *incapable* of producing effects in the minds of men; and moreover, as if he exerts an influence on them, it must be through the medium of motives, if they, as this scheme teaches, have no influence whatever, it is clear that he cannot produce any effects through their instrumentality.

Either, therefore, that doctrine of the sacred word, so fully taught, and the ground of so many warnings and exhortations, must be given up as erroneous, or this scheme must be pronounced to be false.

XIII. It involves a denial of the wisdom and justice of God, in establishing a moral government over mankind.

If they have no power to produce effects, if no necessary connexion exists between their perceptions and actions, if they have no certainty of their relations, obligations, nor past being, if, in a word, they have no souls and no existence, but are a mere series of perceptions, affections, and volitions, wholly independent of each other, directly created by God, what can be more preposterous than to treat them as real existences, possessed of intelligence, efficiency, and conscience, and the authors of voluntary actions, and to establish over them a moral government for the purpose of controlling their agency? Or if men are real existences and enjoy intelligence, but still are destitute of power, and owe their actions to divine efficiency, what can be more unreasonable than authoritatively to require them to produce effects of which they are incapable of being the cause; or more unjust than to hold them responsible for the nature of the acts which are created in them, and reward or punish them for them, with everlasting happiness or misery?

XIV. It is irreconcileable with the doctrine of the scriptures, that God desires men universally to obey his law.

That he desires from them a perfect obedience to his government, is too apparent to need a formal proof here. It is demonstrated by his holiness and wisdom, by his requirements, by his hatred of sin and its perpetra-

tors, by the stupendous system of means which he employs to prevent it and recover men from its service, and finally, by his oath. But such being his desire, how happens it that he does not cause men universally to obey his law, if, as this theory teaches, he is the sole author of their agency? How is it that he gives existence to sin; that he almost universally contravenes his wishes by creating actions, which are violations of his law, and displease, dishonour, and injure him? In what an attitude does this theory exhibit him,—as, on the one hand, proclaiming, while he is himself the sole cause of their actions, that such only as his law requires, are compatible with his rights and glory, that his will is that they alone shall be exercised, and threatening vengeance on every disregard of his injunctions; and yet, on the other, almost uniformly neglecting to create these actions, and giving existence to those which he prohibits. No one who knows any thing of the volume of inspiration, can need to be told that such is not the picture which that exhibits of the ruler of the universe.

XV. It is utterly inexplicable, on the ground of this theory, from what motive it is, that the Most High gives existence to the sinful actions of his creatures.

Is it because he delights in sin? But why then does he represent it as the object of his abhorrence? Why prohibit and punish it? Is it in order that, by its punishment, he may display his hatred of it and love of holiness? But would an earthly ruler make any such exhibition of his abhorrence of crime as could be at all creditable, by forcing his subjects to become the instruments of destroying each other's lives, and then denouncing and executing them as

murderers? Besides, how, according to this theory, is the punishment of sin to produce any such effect on his creatures? Not by a moral influence, for—as it teaches—no such influence is ever exerted on them by the measures of his administration. *They* never affect their minds as motives—for they never produce in them any perceptions or feelings. No such effects ever exist there, but as they are created by him. And they moreover, according to the theory, never exert any influence after being created there. They are in no sense instrumental to the existence of volitions. They neither possess any influence over their nature, nor contribute at all to their being; for these also, like those, must owe their existence and nature entirely to the act of God.

Is it in order that he may manifest his benevolence by the redemption of men from sin and its punishment? But would an earthly monarch gain any credit for wisdom and goodness, by spontaneously giving existence to evils that he might exhibit his skill in remedying them, by breaking the limbs of his subjects, in order that he might erect hospitals for their gratuitous restoration?

Such is the picture this theory presents of the benevolence of the Deity!

XVI. It obviously follows from this scheme, that God is the only agent in the universe.

He is the only being that exercises affections, exerts volitions, and produces effects. Men are not causes but effects, not actors but passive subjects of his agency, not perceivers, lovers, haters, and choosers, but mere perceptions, affections, and choices, the results of his volition. They are

demonstrably no more moral agents than acts are, as acts are, according to the theory, all that belong to their being. They are no more intelligent beings, capable of voluntarily producing effects and being the subjects of rewards and punishments, than any perceptions, affections, and choices are ; no more than so many portions of inanimate matter, or their operations. God is the only moral agent in the universe, and to him belongs all the morality of all the actions which he creates, as well as of those which he exerts.

XVII. What a stupendous work of uselessness, contradiction and folly, according to this scheme, is the whole system of God's moral administration :—a ruler without an empire, a government without any subjects, a system of ends without any means for their accomplishment, requirements and sanctions confounding all distinction between effects and causes, between mind and matter, without a trace of wisdom, goodness, justice, or truth. What must be the infatuation of those who persuade themselves that such is the picture which the scriptures exhibit, and which reason sanctions, of the character and government of the Holy One of Israel ?

XVIII. But if this theory is true, we have no certainty that even the Most High himself exists.

Our knowledge of his existence is not direct, but mediate ; a result acquired by reasoning ; a conclusion from evidence furnished by his works. But if this theory is correct, there can be no such thing as certainty, argument, or evidence. For not having, according to the scheme,—as has already been shewn—any certainty of our own existence, nor of the

existence of any objects external to ourselves, nor of any past events, we have no *means* whatever of arriving at the knowledge of his existence. The only possible indications of it, that fall within our grasp, are those furnished by the perceptions, affections, and volitions, which he creates in us; and as these cease to be, as soon as they come into existence, and moreover take place successively, or so that at most only one perception, affection, and volition, exists at the same identical moment, we manifestly are never in possession, at any one time, of sufficient materials for an argument. The premises cease to exist, ere the conclusion is created; the proofs vanish from being, before the result which they demonstrate is attained.

And even if that were not the fact,—if all the materials for the argument were to be created simultaneously in our minds,—we still could have no certainty of the correctness of our conclusions; for as, according to the theory, neither the existence nor nature of those conclusions is caused even instrumentally by the evidences from which they are derived, but owe their being and nature entirely to the immediate act of God, we plainly can have no certainty that they actually sustain toward each other the relations which we ascribe to them, nor that their connexion is not wholly arbitrary and deceptive.

But it were an endless task to trace all the errors and absurdities of this system. Enough has been said to show it to be a wretched fiction of weak and infatuated minds, without a semblance of evidence to sustain it, abhorrent to all common sense and reason, and undisguisedly at war with every doctrine of natural and revealed religion. A scheme

more palpably false, more fatal to all human virtue and hope, and more fearfully impious in its imputations on the Most High, it may be safely said has never been devised by either the fanatical friends or enemies of his cause. It is matter of amazement that any can have imposed on themselves or others the belief of it, by the empty dogmatism and shallow argument which have been the sole instruments of its propagation.

The moral influence of the scheme must obviously be of the most unfriendly character. The views which it presents of God and his government, of ourselves and our destiny, in place of awakening joy and confidence in him, a feeling of security under his administration, and a holy gratitude for his goodness, are adapted to freeze every such affection, and inspire the horror of victims who find themselves thrown within the grasp of a merciless tyrant, or the stern and haughty contempt and disregard of those, who forced to believe that their agency cannot influence their fate, resolve to dismiss it from their concern. What influence on the subjects of an earthly monarch, would be exerted by a belief, that by some inexplicable influence he created all their actions, and arbitrarily rendered them rebellious or obedient as he pleased; and that he designed, in the same manner, to pardon or punish them, as his caprice or interest should dictate? Could it inspire any other feeling than that of horror, hatred, or utter recklessness? And how can this theory, which exhibits our immortal interests as in the hands of such a being, awaken any better feelings? While all other religious schemes produce a character in their disciples corresponding to their own, is

it to be expected that this is to prove an exception? I appeal to those who have witnessed its influence, whether such traits have not characterised its disciples?—whether it has not blunted their finer sensibilities, frozen up their sympathies, taught them to look forward to their own possible final destruction with singular indifference, and to contemplate the sacrifice which they anticipate of their fellow-men, with a kind of joy, as though it were to be in vindication of their system. It is, indeed, openly held and taught by them, that it is as much, and for the same reason, our duty to rejoice in the destruction of those who perish, as in the salvation of those who are redeemed; and to be as willing that the one destiny should be assigned to ourselves as the other.

Such being the character of the theory, those who adopt and inculcate it as a doctrine of revelation, assume a most fearful responsibility. To say that they take upon themselves to teach as from God what his word does not authorize, is to state but half the fact. The system is not only without authority from him, but involves the total subversion of his word. It is childish, out of any respect to them, it is criminal to overlook or disguise this fact. The scheme is totally false, or every fact of revelation, all human knowledge, all common sense, are an empty phantasm. It strikes as sure and fatal a blow at all religion, and certainty, as does the system of Hume. It, in truth, is his system in its most essential features, merely disguised under the name of Christian theology, in place of atheistical philosophy; and its propagators are the propagators of his sceptical theory *against* the gospel, in place of the gospel

itself. No matter what their character is; no matter what their intentions are; no matter how much truth they preach —inconsistently of course—along with their theory. That does not alter the fact in regard to the theory itself. So far as that is concerned, they are the disciples of Hume, not of Jesus Christ, the inculcators of atheism, not of the gospel of the grace of God. Is it not time that the church opened its eyes to this fact, and gave to the system—as to other fundamental errors—the place which it merits?

PROFESSOR TAYLOR'S

SERMON

ON THE

NATURE AND CAUSE OF SIN.

One of the most important of the views advanced in the foregoing pages, and in the earlier numbers of this work, is that obviously which respects the instrumentality of motives in determining the voluntary agency of mankind ;— the representation that the sole reason of their acting in the manner in which they do, lies in the moral influence exerted on them. This fundamental doctrine of theology and philosophy is involved in all the important positions I have employed myself in sustaining, as well as demonstrated by the arguments directly alleged for its support.

It obviously results from the fact that men are the efficient causes of their voluntary agency ; as no other mode than that of moral suasion of influencing their conduct, can be imagined to be compatible with their giving birth to

their actions. To suppose that their agency is determined by a physical cause, external to themselves, is plainly to suppose them to be moved like machines, in place of acting of their own efficiency.

It is the only view compatible with the fact of their equal physical ability in all instances, either to obey or to violate the divine law; as to teach that a physical in place of a moral cause determines the manner in which they act, is manifestly to represent them as obstructed by a physical impossibility from acting in any other manner than that in which they do. It is consequently the only doctrine consistent with their obligations to exercise, in any instance, a different series of actions from that which they exert, as their obligations plainly can never exceed their physical powers.

No other view is accordant with the fact that motives are the only instruments which the Most High employs in his moral government to restrain his creatures from rebellion and sway them to obedience. It is palpably presented in the doctrine of the scriptures that the spirit of God employs the instrumentality of truth in accomplishing the work of renovation. It is demonstrated to the consciousness of all by the great fact that motives are the only means by whose agency we have any knowledge of ever being influenced ourselves, or to whose instrumentality we ever resort to affect the conduct of each other.

It is the great doctrine of President Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, that moral beings are always determined in their voluntary agency by the motives affecting them,—choosing or refusing according as the objects of

their preference or rejection are regarded as the greatest or least good.

It is, in short, a first truth of philosophy and theology. To deny it is to subvert every cardinal doctrine of both; and to advance a step without its guidance, is to involve one's self in the labyrinths of inconsistency and error.

This great fact, the author of the forementioned discourse—though it is manifestly involved in the main doctrine which he inculcates—seems not sufficiently to have kept in his eye in several of the positions which he has advanced.

I. He has overlooked it in his representation that the reason that men sin, lies in the nature of their physical constitution, in contradistinction from the moral influence exerted on them; as it implies that their nature—contrary to his expressed belief—is the physical cause of their sinning.

"As there can no more be sin, without circumstances of temptation, than there can be sin without a nature to be tempted, why ascribe sin *exclusively to nature?* I answer, it is truly and properly ascribed to *nature*, and *not* to circumstances, because all mankind sin in all the appropriate circumstances of their being. For all the world ascribe an effect to the nature of a thing, when no possible change in its appropriate circumstances will change the effect; or when the effect is uniformly the same in all its appropriate circumstances. To illustrate this by an example. Suppose a tree, which in one soil bears only bad fruit. Change its circumstances, transplant it to another soil, and it bears very good fruit. Now we say, and all would say, the fact that it bore bad fruit was owing to its situation; to its circumstances; for by changing its circumstances, you have changed its fruit. Suppose now another tree, which bears bad fruit, place it where you will; change its situation from one soil to another, dig about it and dung it, cultivate it to perfection, do what you will, it still bears bad fruit only. Now every one says the fact is owing to *the nature* of the tree; the cause is in the tree, in its nature.

and *not* in its circumstances. So of mankind, change their circumstances as you may, place them where you will within the limits of their being; do what you will to prevent the consequence, you have one uniform result, entire moral depravity. No change of condition, no increase of light, nor of motives, no instructions nor warnings, no any thing, within the appropriate circumstances of their being, changes the result."

"The apostle, using language as all other men use it, traces the universal depravity of men to *their nature*, and thus most explicitly teaches, contrary to the Arminian view, that it is *not* owing to circumstances."—p. 14, 16.

The cause, then, that men sin, lies wholly in their physical nature, not at all in the moral influence under which they act;—so far from it, that no modification whatever of that influence can ever possibly raise it to a control over their nature, or produce any change in the character of their actions.

This position, however, is manifestly erroneous, if the doctrine respecting moral suasion, which I have advanced, is correct. If motives are the only means which ever influence men in their conduct, it follows inevitably that if nature is the cause even instrumentally of their acting in the manner in which they do, it must produce its effect solely through that medium. To affirm both that it is the cause of their sinning, and that its influence is not exerted through the instrumentality of temptation, is, in so many words, to affirm that it produces its effect as a mere physical cause. There plainly are no other causes but such as are either moral or physical, nor any other methods of producing effects than either instrumentally by suasion, or directly by force.

But it is demonstrable beyond controversy that the only medium through which the physical constitution can exert

an influence over the conduct of mankind, is that of moral suasion. The only medium through which it can prove the cause of their sinning, is plainly that of its passions or affections,—in other words, its susceptibilities of pleasure and pain. But it is equally obvious, that the only way in which they exert their agency, is by their influence as motives. Their sole method of procuring their gratification is that of making it to be regarded as the greatest apparent good. They never accomplish their indulgence except by rendering it a matter of choice, and, of course never render it an object of choice except by the motives which they present. It is as plain that the desires of the hungry man never lead him to eat except as they prompt him as motives to the choice of it, as it is that he never eats except as he chooses the indulgence; and as plain, therefore, that his nature never exerts any influence over his conduct except by means of moral suasion, as it is that it exercises any influence over it at all.

This view of our author is thus clearly disproved by all our experience on the subject, is in obvious contradiction to his main doctrine that we are voluntary in all our transgressions, and involves on the face of it the very dogma which he has formally discarded, that our "nature is the physical or efficient cause of our sinning."

The position itself being thus erroneous, the arguments employed for its support are, of course, of the same character. This a slight consideration of them will render sufficiently apparent.

His first is founded on the passage adopted as his text, "and were by nature children of wrath even as others."

He regards the apostle as employing the term nature to denote the physical constitution, and as uttering the declaration for the express purpose of showing that that constitution is "the cause of all sin." He is thus represented as affirming that "we are by physical constitution obnoxious to punishment." If this interpretation is just, the passage must obviously mean either that we are deserving of punishment, because our nature is such as it is, or else that we *become* deserving of it in consequence of possessing such a nature. To ascribe the first to the apostle is to represent him as teaching the doctrine of physical depravity in so many words. To adopt the latter is to subject ourselves to the conclusion, either that it exerts its agency simply as a physical cause, which again involves us in that doctrine, or that it produces its effect solely through the medium of moral suasion, the exact reverse of the position which he employs the passage to sustain. In neither of these senses, then, will it bear the interpretation ascribed by him to it;—the one implying the doctrine which he disclaims, the other contradicting his position that our nature causes our sinning in some other way than through the instrumentality of temptation.

But it is undoubtedly erroneous to interpret the term nature as denoting the physical constitution. It is obviously employed figuratively for the period or character antecedent to regeneration. The apostle had stated to the Ephesians, that he was accustomed daily to pray that God would increase their knowledge of the great truths of the gospel, leading them to more enlarged views of the hope to which they were called, and of the riches of the inheritance to

which they were destined, and of the power of the Redeemer to exalt them to its possession; and apparently to assist their apprehension of these subjects, reminds them of what God had already done in converting them from the slavery of sin, in pardoning their transgressions, and advancing them to the privileges of children. His language is equivalent to the following:—"We were lately dead in trespasses and sins, living as the world generally does in the unrestrained indulgence of our passions, and exposed, whether Jews or Gentiles, while continuing in that course, to divine wrath, as all the impenitent are. But such are the riches of God's mercy toward us, that he has of his own will converted us from that rebellion, rescued us from condemnation, and exalted us to the enjoyments of the members of his household."

He is not, then, employed here in assigning the cause of all sin, nor in making the remotest allusion to it, but is simply in illustration of the riches of the divine mercy toward them, reminding them of the state in which they formerly lived of rebellion and obnoxiousness to punishment, and how God had spontaneously interposed and raised them from that moral death to a life of obedience to Christ, and exalted them from condemnation to acceptance.

He founds his second argument on the fact that men sin *universally* antecedently to regeneration.

"The scriptures in many forms teach the universal sinfulness of mankind in all the appropriate circumstances of their being." "If then the absolute uniformity of an event proves that it is *by nature*, then does this uniformity of human sinfulness prove that man is depraved by nature." p. 17, 18.

But this universality is obviously no better proof that *nature* is the cause of it, than it is that it results from temptation; as there is undoubtedly as great a similarity in the *kind* of moral influence exerted on men antecedently to regeneration, as there is in either their nature or their actions. The temptations which assail them are in kind essentially the same, addressed to their animal appetites and the affections exercised by them toward each other, by the objects surrounding them adapted to afford gratification to their susceptibilities of enjoyment. They vary, indeed, in the order in which they occur, in intenseness, and in the combinations in which they assail different individuals, but not more than those individuals vary in the peculiarities of their conduct.

But beyond this, it is absolutely demonstrable that it is owing wholly to the circumstances in which men are placed that they sin as they do, as it is owing entirely to those circumstances that the susceptibilities of their physical constitution are ever brought within reach of development and gratification. Thus it is owing to the circumstances in which *the mind* is placed—namely, its union with an organised body, that it becomes the subject of any of the sensations of which that is the instrument, as touch, taste, sight, hearing, hunger, thirst, pain; and it is owing to the circumstances in which *the body* is placed—namely, its relations to other physical objects—that it becomes the medium of conveying to the mind any of the perceptions derived from the external universe. And being thus ultimately indebted for the very existence of all its perceptions to the agency on it of objects external to itself, and consequently

for all the excitement of its desires and affections which its perceptions occasion, it is as obviously indebted to them for its choosing the course which it does of indulging its affections. Their agency being the sole instrument of calling its susceptibilities into exercise, its nature must, of course, determine the nature of their excitement, and thence the choices of the mind in regard to their indulgence. It is not more obvious that the soul could never exercise its affections towards the objects to which it directs them if they were not brought within the range of its perceptions, than it is that it would never exert them in the manner in which it does, if its perceptions of them were not such as they are.

He alleges as a third proof of his position, "that the scriptures teach the same thing, by asserting the universal necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Now I ask, how can the interposition of this divine agent be necessary to produce holiness in man, if light, and truth, and motives will do it?" p. 18.

This argument, however, either goes against the position which he employs it to sustain, or else forces him into the doctrine of physical depravity. For what is it which the Holy Spirit must be supposed to do in accomplishing the work of regeneration;—the simple production of a change in the moral influence affecting the mind, or of a change in the physical constitution of the mind itself? Plainly one or the other. The effect on the agency of the renewed must be brought about either by a change in their nature, or in the causes which influence that nature. If the first,

then the change is manifestly a merely physical one, and consists in the removal from the constitution of a physical depravity. But if in place of that the Spirit is employed in simply changing the moral influence affecting the mind, that is, in bringing a better one to act on it, then instead of disproving, it corroborates the position I am advocating. If nothing but a better moral influence is requisite to lead men to holiness, it is, of course, clear that the reason of their not exercising it, except as they do, lies in the nature of the influence affecting them.

As a fourth proof of his position he says: "The *reason* assigned by our Lord for the necessity of the Spirit's agency, is equally decisive, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh.'" To which I add, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;"—the manifest meaning of which is simply, that it is the body which is the subject of the natural birth, but that that which is born of the Spirit is the soul. The object, accordingly, of our Lord in uttering it was, not to assign the reason of the necessity of the Spirit's agency, but to correct the misapprehension of Nicodemus that his language implied that the *body* instead of the *soul* must be born again, in order to admission into the kingdom of God.

He presents as a fifth argument, an alleged "express declaration" by the scriptures "of the inefficiency of all truth and motives; or of all that is called *moral suasion.* Saith the apostle, 'I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase; so then neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.'" p. 19.

But this, like a former argument, goes against his posi-

tion, or else involves him in the doctrine of physical depravity. For if, as he represents, moral suasion from its *nature* is unadapted and incompetent to lead men to holiness, and consequently is never used by the Divine Spirit as the instrument of their renovation, the reason of it plainly is, that the mind is destitute of a capacity for obedience. Will this author affirm that the mind possesses a capacity which even God can never lead it to exercise? What is a capacity which cannot be made to be exerted? How can its existence be proved? But if he cannot deny the possibility of God's leading the mind to obedience by means of moral suasion, then he plainly cannot infer from passages simply stating that he *leads* it to obedience, that he does not do it through that instrumentality; and, consequently, cannot claim that the reason that it does not begin to obey earlier than it does, does not lie in the nature of the temptations which assail it, but in the peculiarity of its physical constitution.

He adds, in further support of his views, "an appeal to human consciousness" in respect to the supreme love of the world; but his argument subverts in place of sustaining his position, as it shows that it is through the medium simply of temptations, addressed by the world to our susceptibilities of enjoyment from its objects, that we are led to seek happiness from them supremely.

"What then are they conscious of? They are conscious that in *all sin* they do freely and voluntarily set their hearts, their supreme affections, on the world rather than on God" —that is, love the world supremely; and "they are conscious that this supreme love of the world is the fountain and source of all their *other* sins." What *other* sins are

men conscious of, beside *all* sin? "They are also conscious that they are *led* to set their hearts on the world, by their propensities to worldly good which belong to their nature." But how? Assuredly—by his own showing—through the medium of moral suasion. "They know this as well as they know *why* they eat, when they are hungry, or drink when they are thirsty." What then is the reason that they eat when hungry? Plainly not simply that they have that sensation. The inducement to eat is presented by the perception that food is adapted to afford relief and gratification. Were it not for the knowledge of that fact, their hunger would never lead them to eat. "A man *choose* the world as his chief good, fix his whole heart on it as if God were unworthy of a thought, and not know *why* he does so? He knows he does so for *the good* there is in it; for *the gratification* of those natural propensities for this inferior good which he ought to govern."—That is, in so many words, he is conscious that in all this he acts under the influence of *motives*, and that it is *the temptation* presented by the world that leads him to sin, and not his nature in contradistinction from that.

His last argument, on the subject, is an "appeal to facts,"—to "the moral history of man since the first apostacy,"—exhibiting the inadequacy of "means to restrain him from the greatest sins." p. 20.

But this is the same, in principle, with the former argument from the universality of sin. If the fact, that *all* sin does not prove that it is owing to their nature, any more than it does that it arises from the moral influence which assails them, neither will the *enormity* of the sins which they

commit prove that to be the fact, any more than it will demonstrate the truth of the other position. Besides, the peculiarly enormous sins which men commit, are obviously to be accounted for by peculiar temptations, as much as any others. Great crimes are the result of great temptations. The reasons, for example, of the early persecutions of religion are to be sought in the peculiar views of its persecutors; and the reasons that similar persecutions are not now prevalent, are found in the different views which are entertained, and not in any difference between the physical constitutions of ancient Roman pagans and modern Roman catholics.

So much for the arguments which he employs to sustain his position. But he has not only failed in these efforts for its establishment, but has furnished materials for its subversion in the very doctrine which constitutes the chief peculiarity of his discourse, that all the sin of man lies in his choices. For his sins being always thus the objects of his choice, and the reason of his choosing them being—as Edwards has shown and as accords with every one's consciousness—that he regards them as the greatest apparent good, that is, that the motives which urge him to the choice of them are stronger than those which excite him to any other choice,—it is clear beyond controversy that the reason of his sinning as he does, lies in the moral influence which tempts him to it, and not in his physical constitution in contradistinction from that.

The truth on this subject is manifestly simply this: it is owing to his nature's being what it is that man is *a moral agent* merely; not that he is a sinful or a holy one. It

simply qualifies him to exert voluntary actions, but lays no foundation of a certainty or probability what the moral character of the actions is to be which he will exert. That is determined solely by the moral influence which affects him.

II. He has fallen into a similar error in representing, that no moral influence can be adequate to prevent men from sinning.

"So of mankind, change their circumstances as you may; place them where you will within the limits of their being; do what you will to prevent the consequence, you have one uniform result, entire moral depravity. No change of condition, no increase of light nor of motives, no instructions nor warnings, no any thing, within the appropriate circumstances of their being, changes the result. Unless there be some interposition, which is not included in these circumstances, unless something be done which is above nature, the case is hopeless. Place a human being any where within the appropriate limits and scenes of his *immortal* existence, and such is his nature, that he will be a depraved sinner."—p. 14.

This position follows, indeed, as a natural result from the other; for if the reason that men sin does not lie at all in the temptations which assail them, but wholly in their nature, it is apparent that no diminution of that temptation, nor any modification of the moral influence exerted on them, can change the character of their conduct.

It is, however, an extraordinary position to be advanced in connexion with the leading doctrine of the discourse, that men are voluntary in all for which they are guilty. While it is held that they choose and refuse in all their sinful agency, it is surely a singular step to affirm that still they are neither determined nor influenced at all in their choices by the views which they entertain of the objects of their

preference and rejection; and that no possible modification of their views can produce any change in the character of their conduct?

This is open to essentially the same objections as those by which the former proposition is embarrassed.

It implies, as has been shown in another place, that the cause that men sin is wholly physical in its character, inasmuch as moral means have no adaptation to overcome or counteract it; and, consequently, that they are constitutionally incapable of obedience; or else involves the absurd position that men are endowed with a capacity which no means to be found in the universe are adequate to bring into exercise, and of the existence of which therefore there plainly can be no evidence.

It involves a denial that the Holy Spirit renews the mind by the instrumentality of moral means; and, consequently, implies that regeneration is a change of the physical constitution; and of course, therefore, proceeds on an assumption of the truth of the doctrine of physical depravity.

It is utterly irreconcileable with the numerous passages of the sacred volume which represent the manner in which we act, as resulting from the moral influence to which we are exposed. The petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," plainly proceeds on the ground that to be exempted from temptation, is to be prevented from transgression; as does the apostolic assurance, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear

it." A still more striking passage is that of James i. 12–18. quoted in the discourse, the meaning of which obviously is summarily this. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. But let no one infer from the fact that temptation is permitted to overtake him, that God is desirous or willing that he should yield to it. God has no such desire. It is man, not God, who cherishes temptation and delights in sin. Beware that no error is committed here. All the gifts which come down from God are invariably good, and perfectly so. In place of being our tempter, he has of his sovereign mercy, "with the word of truth," counteracted our temptations and brought us to obey his will."

It were easy, by tracing the relations of this position to other truths of the gospel, to add many other evidences of the difficulties by which it is embarrassed, but these furnish a sufficient illustration of its erroneousness.

III. He has involved himself in the same error in representing, that a disposition or bias to sin exists in the nature of man, antecedently to the commencement of his agency, and is the cause of all his sinful actions.

"There is an obvious distinction between a *disposition* or tendency to sin which is *prior* to all sin, and a *sinful* disposition. I am not saying then that there is not what with entire propriety may be called a disposition, or tendency to sin, which is the *cause of all sin*; nor that there is not, as a *consequence* of this disposition or tendency, what with equal propriety, may be called a *sinful* disposition, which is the true cause of all *other* sin, itself excepted." p. 7.

According to this representation, then, the nature of the mind itself, apart from all consideration of what moral influence may be brought to bear on it, constitutes a certainty

that it will sin in all its agency. But this is plainly the doctrine of physical depravity. As this disposition is the cause of all sin, and of course, therefore, exists before the commencement of moral agency, it is manifestly an attribute of the physical constitution. And as its accomplishing that effect does not depend at all on the nature of the motives which affect the mind, it must obviously produce it, either directly by its own efficiency as a physical cause, or indirectly by incapacitating the mind to exert any other species of actions.

IV. He is equally at fault in representing it as the doctrine generally of the orthodox, that the sin and guilt of the mind pertain exclusively to its voluntary actions, and in claiming that to be the doctrine taught by Calvin and Edwards.

That is most assuredly the doctrine of the scriptures, but as certainly neither is nor ever has been the doctrine of the clergy and church generally, since the reformation. So far is that from having been the fact, that not a single Calvinistic writer, in our language, of eminence—unless very recent—has, so far as I know, formally and distinctly taught, that sin is attributable to actions only, in distinction from nature, and avoiding the errors of the opposite scheme, exhibited a system consistent with that doctrine. Innumerable passages may, indeed, be found in all the most distinguished authors, exhibiting views which *involve* this doctrine, but no formal and consistent inculcation of it, accompanied with an exhibition and rejection of the errors of the system to which it stands opposed. In place of this, the mode universally in which Calvinists have accounted for the

mind's exerting the sinful actions which it does, is by a depravity of its nature.

Thus Edwards, for example, was so far from teaching or believing that sin pertains to voluntary actions only, that he wrote a volume for the express purpose of proving—from the fact that men exert sinful actions—that their *nature itself* is also depraved with a moral depravity antecedently to and independently of their agency; and formally affirmed that their nature *must be created* with a moral disposition, *in itself* either right or wrong in the highest sense, antecedently to volition, reflection, or thought, and wholly independently of them. That the nature of man is thus depraved, was the doctrine also of all the reformers, and has been of all the Calvinistic churches to the present day. Such is now, or was very recently, the doctrine of the great body of those with whom this gentleman is immediately surrounded, and of the clergy generally in this country. Witness the outcry that has been raised even at his very partial inculcation of the doctrine, mingled, as he has it, with that of physical depravity; and this, long after it had been held and consistently and perspicuously taught by several others. Witness the severe denunciation with which, at an earlier period, the first number of this work was generally received by the clergy. Witness the formal attempt of the writer in the Christian Advocate to overthrow the doctrine, and fix on it the stigma of heresy, and the affecting regrets which he utters at the threatened abandonment of the ancient doctrine of physical depravity.

The orthodox have, indeed,—most inconsistently to be sure with their theoretical system—held and taught very

perspicuously and prominently a great variety of views which directly *involve* this doctrine; and this is the ground on which the sanction virtually of their authority should have been claimed, and is the only ground on which such a claim can with any propriety be advanced.

Thus Edwards, notwithstanding his theory respecting concreated dispositions and the depravity of nature, held and taught with his accustomed perspicuity and energy, that men are moral agents, that they are blameable for their violations of the divine law, and are under obligation to reform and yield obedience to the gospel, and proceeded in all his addresses to their consciences and affections, precisely as though motives were the only instruments of influencing their conduct, and as though no physical disqualification for obedience—such as his theory represents—pertained to their constitutions to exculpate them from blame. But this does not constitute any proof that he did not hold and teach the doctrine of physical depravity, totally subversive as it is of all these truths; and no one can, with any propriety, allege it as such proof. As well might it be alleged as proof that he did not teach nor hold the doctrine of imputation, with which it is equally incompatible. As well might the fact that Emmons teaches that men are moral agents, be adduced as proof that he does not represent God as creating their actions. As well, in short, might it be assumed at once, that no man can hold opinions inconsistent with each other.

In like manner the writer in the Christian Advocate believes and teaches a great variety of truths according with and involving this doctrine, and totally contradicting his

theory respecting human depravity. But no one in his senses will think of attempting, directly in the teeth of his assertions, to prove by this fact that he does not hold and teach that theory? While, therefore, it neither has nor can be denied, that the orthodox have universally most distinctly held and prominently inculcated a great multitude of truths most clearly involving this doctrine; it is still equally manifest that in their theoretical views on the nature and origin of sin, of regeneration, and many other topics, they have totally overlooked and formally denied it; and taught, in contradistinction from it, that the *nature* of man is sinful as well as his conduct, and is the sole cause of his exerting sinful actions.

On the whole, it is matter of much satisfaction that Professor Taylor has given publicity to his views on this fundamental subject of theology. Though still involved, in my apprehension, in some inaccuracies which I have thought it not unimportant to point out, he has thus become the avowed inculcator of the great scriptural doctrine, so essential to be held and taught with distinctness and energy, but which has been for so many ages lost sight of or discarded—that sin is an attribute of voluntary actions only: a doctrine most indubitably true, and certain ultimately to prevail and prove eminently fruitful of the blessings of which truth is customarily productive; while the errors with which unhappily, in his exhibition of it, it is still embarrassed will exert, it is hoped, but a far inferior influence, and speedily pass away.

As it respects the zealous imputations of error and apostacy, with which the opponents of the doctrine have thought

proper to assail its friends, they are not—to such as are satisfied of the justness of their views and conscious of a capacity to vindicate them—adapted to awaken any very serious alarm. It will be time enough to indulge in apprehensions at their assaults, when they shall have become able to allege any arguments against the system, of any pretensions to accuracy and force, or to extricate their own theory from the abysses of error, contradiction, and absurdity, which are its native element.

VIEWS

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CONTENTS.

ART. I.—Dr. Dwight's Views of the Cause of Sin, 109

ART. II.—The Christian Spectator's Review on the Means of Regeneration, ... 163

It is the author's intention to publish this work hereafter semi-annually, in November and May; in numbers of 75 or 100 pages each: Four numbers will constitute a volume. It will be devoted chiefly, as heretofore, to discussion on the doctrines of religion. A greater variety, however, will be introduced in topics of that kind; and reviews occasionally offered of interesting theological works, and notices of important ecclesiastical events.

DR. DWIGHT'S

VIEWS OF THE CAUSE OF SIN.

SINCE the publication of the last Number of this work, several disquisitions on some of the subjects of which I have heretofore treated, have made their appearance, which merit some attention.

The first which I shall notice, is "An Inquiry into the Nature of Sin as exhibited in Dr. Dwight's Theology, by Clericus,"—from the pen, as is too publicly known to leave any reserve in regard to its origin necessary, of the author of the discussion in the Christian Spectator respecting "Edwards's views of Original Sin," and of the Concio ad Clerum to which he refers,—the object of which is to vindicate that eminent theologian from the charge of having taught the doctrine of physical depravity.

I shall first briefly exhibit Dr. Dwight's views of the depravity of man, and then notice this gentleman's statements and arguments respecting them. The question to be determined, as stated by Clericus himself is, whether Dr. D. "maintained the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt nature,

which is prior to and distinct from all action." The following are the principal passages, from which the reader is to form his opinion on the subject.

" Since our first parents were entirely holy, how could they become sinful?

" This question in its simple and proper form is no other than this. How can a holy being become sinful? or, How can a holy being transgress the law of God? This question, to which, perhaps, no satisfactory philosophical answer can be given, has been unnecessarily embarrassed by the modes in which answers to it have been attempted. The language often adopted has been in a great measure abstract; and being supposed to have meaning when it had none, and to convey ideas which it did not contain, has served only to bewilder, when it was intended to instruct.

" The common method of conducting the investigation of this subject has been, to seek for some cause in the *nature* of man, styled *a principle of action*, to which this effect might be fairly attributed. As the principles of moral action in Adam must have been holy, and could in no degree have been sinful, it is inquired, *How could a holy principle* be the cause of *sinful action?*

" It will be obvious to a careful examiner, that in this inquiry the word *principle* is intended to denote a fixed unchangeable cause, productive only of effects of the same moral nature, and is supposed to exist and to operate during the interval of transgression. On this foundation the inquiry is made; and if the foundation be solid and just, the inquiry cannot be answered; because in the actual case, viz. the case of our first parents, there was no other principle of action beside a holy principle.

" But in this scheme of thought there is a plain and important fallacy; not improbably originated and certainly established by the use of the word *principle.* I do not deny; on the contrary I readily admit, that *there is a cause of* moral action in intelligent beings, frequently indicated by the words principle, affections, habits, nature, tendency, propensity, and several others. In this case, however, as well as in many others, it is carefully to be observed, that these terms indicate a cause, which to us is wholly unknown, except that its existence is proved by its effects. There is, as every man who does

not embrace the doctrine of casual, or contingent existence, must admit, *a reason, why one being is holy and another sinful ; or why the same being is holy at one time, and sinful at another*, as truly as that there is a reason *why he exists*. There is also a reason *why a being is at some times more strongly* inclined to the practice of sin or holiness, than at others. Our judgment respecting moral beings is customarily formed in accordance with these truths. We speak of *human nature as sinful*, intending, *not the actual commission of sin*, but *a general characteristic of man*, under the *influence* of which he *has* committed sins heretofore, and is prepared and prone to commit others. With the *same meaning* in our minds we use the phrases, *sinful propensity, corrupt heart, depraved mind ;* and the contrary ones, *holy or virtuous disposition, moral rectitude, holiness of character*, and many others of the like import. When we use these kinds of phraseology, we intend that a reason really exists, although undefinable and unintelligible by ourselves, why one mind will either usually or uniformly be the subject of holy volitions, and another of sinful ones. We do not intend to assert that any one, or any number of the volitions of the man whom we characterise, has been or will be holy ; nor do we indeed design to *refer immediately to actual volitions at all.* Instead of this we mean to indicate *a state of mind generally existing, out of which* holy volitions may in one case be fairly expected to arise, and sinful ones in another ; such a state as that if it were to be changed, and the existing state of a holy mind were to become the same with that of a sinful mind, its volitions would thenceforth be sinful ; and vice versa. This state is *the cause* which I have mentioned ; a cause the existence of which *must be admitted*, unless we acknowledge it to be a perfect casualty that any volition is sinful rather than holy. This cause is what is so often mentioned in the scriptures under the name of *the heart ;* as when it is said, *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* I have already remarked that this cause is unknown, except by its effects. From these, however, we learn that it is not so powerful, nor so unchangeable, as to incline the mind in which it exists so strongly to holiness, as to prevent it absolutely from sinning ; nor so strongly to sin, as to prevent it absolutely from acting in a holy manner. Both revelation and facts, the only sources from which we derive any knowledge of the subject, place this truth beyond a reasonable doubt. Beings who

have sinned, have afterwards become holy, and beings who have been holy, have afterwards sinned: and nothing more seems necessary to explain this subject to us sufficiently, than barely to suppose, what we cannot avoid supposing, that a temptation actually presented to the mind, is disproportioned in its power to the inclination of that mind toward resistance."

"There are certain characteristics of human nature, which, considered by themselves, are innocent. Such are hunger, thirst, the fear of suffering, and the desire of happiness. All these are inseparable not only from the rational, but also from the animal nature as existing in this world, and accompany the christian through every degree of holiness which he attains, as truly as the sinner."

"Some of the natural human characteristics are amiable. Such are natural affection; the simplicity and sweetness of disposition in children, often found also in persons of adult years; compassion; generosity; and what is sometimes called natural conscientiousness."

"*These and all other qualities of the mind are however means either of virtue or sin, according to the nature of that controlling disposition or energy which constitutes the moral character.*

"By this disposition or energy I intend *that unknown cause* whence it arises, that the actions of the mind are either sinful or virtuous. On this energy depends the moral nature of all actions, and the moral character of every mind. This character and these actions are variously and extensively modified by the attributes above mentioned. But the moral nature is not changed. So far as they have a prevailing influence, a sinful disposition is checked and prevented from operating in the worst manner and degree. Under the prevalence of a sinful disposition these attributes are partly extinguished, and partly converted into instruments of sin. In a virtuous mind, they all become means of virtue, and increase the energy of such a mind."

"I shall only add that *a cause of human depravity* is here alleged, of which all the characteristics mentioned in the commencement of this discourse, may be truly predicated, viz. *the corruption of that energy of the mind whence volitions flow*, and which I have heretofore asserted to be *the seat of moral character* in rational beings. This cause must be acknowledged to be universal; to be every where the same; and not to have always existed. It must also be conceded that it began to exist, according to the scriptures, as early as the

effects which have given birth to all our inquiries concerning the corruption of mankind." Theology, Vol. I. 410, 411, 462, 483.

His characteristic perspicuity in these statements and reasonings, leaves no room for reasonable question respecting his meaning.

1. He teaches something more in them, than the simple fact that man exerts sinful actions. His professed object is, not to demonstrate, but to account for their existence,—to ascertain and point out the *cause* of their being exerted in place of obedient ones.

2. He teaches most explicitly that *the cause* of the mind's exerting *the kind* of moral actions which it does—whether good or evil,—lies in its own *physical nature.*

His language is—"I do not deny; on the contrary, I readily admit, that there is a *cause* of moral action *in intelligent beings*, frequently indicated by the words principle, tendency, propensity, and several others;" and this cause he represents as being in the nature of the mind itself. "We speak of human *nature* as *sinful*, intending *not the actual commission of sin*, but *a general characteristic of man*, under *the influence* of which he has committed sins, heretofore, and is *prepared and prone* to commit others. With the same meaning in our minds, we use the phrases *sinful propensity*, *corrupt heart*, *depraved mind;* and the contrary ones, *holy* or *virtuous disposition*, *&c.* When we use these kinds of phraseology, we mean to indicate *a state of mind* generally existing, *out of which*, holy volitions may in one case be fairly expected to arise, and sinful ones in another; *such a state*, as that if it were to be changed, and the existing state of a holy mind were to become the same with that of a sinful mind, *its volitions* would thenceforth be *sinful.*

This state is *the cause* which I have mentioned; a cause the existence of which must be admitted, unless we acknowledge it to be a perfect casualty that any volition is sinful rather than holy." "By this disposition or energy, I intend that unknown cause, *whence it arises* that the actions of the mind are either *sinful or holy.* On this energy depends *the moral nature of all actions, and the moral character of every mind.*"

What language could possibly have been employed more explicitly to state, first, that there is a cause that the mind exerts sinful actions in place of holy ones; next, that that cause lies wholly in its own physical nature; and finally, that there is no medium between adopting this theory, and embracing the doctrine that there is no cause whatever that the mind exerts such actions as it does instead of others?

3. He represents this *cause as a distinct and peculiar attribute* of the mind, wholly different from all its other constitutional qualities.

"We speak of human *nature* as sinful, intending a general *characteristic* of *man*, under *the influence* of which he has committed sins heretofore, and is prepared and prone to commit others."

"There are *certain characteristics of human nature*, which considered by themselves, are *innocent.* Such are hunger, thirst, the fear of suffering, and the desire of happiness."

"Some of *the natural human characteristics* are *amiable.* Such are natural affection, compassion, generosity, modesty, conscientiousness."

"These and all other qualities of the mind, are however means, either of virtue or sin, according to *the nature* of that *controlling disposition or energy* which constitutes the moral character."

No room is left in these and the passages previously quoted, for rational dispute respecting this point. This characteristic of human *nature*, is not an *act*, but an *energy*

of the mind; not *an effect*, or *state resulting from its other attributes*, but *a power* "*controlling*" *all its* "*other qualities*," and rendering them either the means of virtue or sin, according to its own "*nature;*" not a volition or series of volitions, but the *cause* from which alone they derive their moral character.

4. He regarded the metaphysical nature of this attribute as entirely unknown.

He not only pronounces it to be "undefinable" and "wholly unknown," but also "unintelligible,"—literally incomprehensible and inaccessible to our knowledge; and this consideration, as well as those before adverted to, is completely demonstrative of the fact, that he regarded it as an attribute of the physical constitution, and not in any sense an effect, result, or operation of that constitution.

5. The error which he imputes to those who use the word principle in their inquiries on this subject is, not as Clericus represents, that they teach that a cause exists in the physical constitution of the mind, which determines the moral nature of all its actions; but that in their statements and reasonings respecting it, they represent it as "*a fixed unchangeable cause.*"

6. He exhibits this principle, disposition, or energy, as possessing the same moral character, as the volitions which flow from it.

He denominates it sinful or holy, according to the nature of the actions to which it gives birth, and represents it as constituting the "moral character." The "holy disposition," or "relish for spiritual good," he says, "is the characteristical distinction of holy beings, their *essential* characteristic, without which they would cease to be holy; the want of it, on the contrary, is the primary characteristic of

sinful beings." The " change of heart is a relish for spiritual objects communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost," and " is the *commencement of holiness* in the mind."

To this position Clericus himself must of course fully assent, as he has made it the object of his disquisition, to show, that the terms in question are employed to denote mere *voluntary actions*, in place of physical attributes; and expressly ascribes to them the same moral character, as to the subordinate volitions to which, according to his scheme, they give birth. However therefore he may differ in other points in respect to Dr. Dwight's theory, he cannot, without abandoning his whole argument, deny that Dr. D. attributes to this unknown cause, the same moral character, as to the actions of which it is the source.

7. The truth of all these positions is abundantly confirmed by the fact, that he represents the views which he meant to convey, to be precisely those which were commonly held on the subject, with the exception before noticed respecting the changeableness of the disposition.

That the doctrine of physical depravity, was then, and is still, generally held, not a solitary individual, so far as I know, has yet thought proper to deny, except the author of the Inquiry under consideration, and of an editorial article in a late number of the Christian Spectator, in which reference is made to the subject; and the reluctant admission has finally been wrung even from this gentleman, that there are individuals who hold that doctrine, and the undisguised confession from the Editor of the Spectator, that it is generally held. Thus this latter gentleman says,

" There are many who have a confused idea, that there must be in man a *distinct* and specific *tendency to sin*, previous to all acts of choice: as there is a tendency to food, to drink, and to the pursuit

of happiness. This they consider as a part of man's *nature*, like the constitutional propensities already spoken of; and they *of course* consider it as sinful and *deserving of punishment.*" p. 364.

No one, it seems to me, can hesitate to admit the truth of this representation; but to whom is it applicable, if not to Dr. Dwight, who teaches that,

"Uniform sin proves uniform *tendency* to sin, for nothing more is meant by tendency in any case, but *an aptitude in the nature* of a thing *to produce effects* of a given kind. With this meaning only in view, we say that it is the nature or tendency of an apple tree to produce apples, and of a fig tree to produce figs. In the same manner we must, I think, say, if we would say the truth, that it is *the tendency or nature of the human heart to sin.*" Vol. I. p. 484.

This tendency is thus represented as "previous to all acts of choice," and was, according to the Editor of the Spectator, "of course considered as a part of man's nature," and as *sinful.* Its antecedency to the acts of choice of which it is the cause, is more specifically exhibited in the following passage.

"This *disposition* in Adam was *the cause* whence his virtuous volitions proceeded," and "of necessity *preceded* these volitions, and therefore certainly existed in that state of mind which was *previous* to his *first* volition."

What would this language have been considered as meaning, had it come from the pen of Mr. Harvey, the reviewer of the Discourses of Professor Fitch in the Christian Advocate, or any of the many individuals who have expressed their dissent from the views advanced by this gentleman? If these statements and reasonings do not convey the doctrine of physical depravity, according to the ac-

count in the foregoing passage from the Spectator, of the manner in which it is held and taught, I may safely challenge the author of that statement to verify it in respect to a solitary individual.

This is a brief and plain statement of Dr. Dwight's theory on this subject. No denial or mystification of the obvious meaning of his language, nor any far-fetched or absurd "principles of interpretation," are employed to make out any of these positions. They lie on the very face of his representations, and their truth must, it would seem to me, be apparent to every discerning and impartial eye.

According to the representations of Clericus, however, they are all, with the exception of the sixth, entirely erroneous, or rather perverse and unpardonable misrepresentations, indicating a surprising ignorance of language, and disregard of the true principles of interpretation. So far from teaching, in the foregoing passages from his volumes, the doctrines which I ascribe to him, Dr. Dwight affirms nothing whatever in them of the physical nature of the mind, but employs the terms "unknown cause," "disposition," "relish," "principle," "energy," &c. to designate nothing more nor less than a mere volition!

The reasons for which he solicits the acquiescence of the public in this representation, I shall now proceed to consider.

And the first thing which merits notice, in his method of conducting the discussion is, that he has thought proper to commence it by changing the inquiry from the question at issue,—whether Dr. Dwight "maintained the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt *nature*, which is prior to and distinct from *all action*,"—to his views respecting the nature of sinful *actions*. He says:

"I shall dwell on Dr. Dwight's views respecting the *nature of sin*, [that is, sinful *actions*, as his quotations show,] believing that this, rather than *the mode of accounting for its existence*, [in which he exhibits his views of *the nature of the mind itself*,] or the indivisible moment of its commencement, is the topic of real importance." p. 4.

In thus substituting what Dr. Dwight inculcated on one subject, for what he taught on another, and making it the hinge on which his whole argument turns, he has not only exposed such of his readers as are unwary, to the danger of becoming bewildered, and mistaking the wrong for the right, but has rendered all his subsequent reasoning of no avail, by suspending its force on the assumption thus virtually made, that the mind and its actions are identically the same subject, and thence that Dr. Dwight's views respecting them were precisely the same.

I. Thus the first ground which he presents for the conclusion that Dr. Dwight does not teach the doctrine of physical depravity, is the fact that he represents all the sin which men *commit*, or of which they are the causes, as lying in their *voluntary actions;* or in other words, that *all their actions which are sinful, are voluntarily exerted by themselves.*

"Dr. Dwight says, 'Man is *the actor* of his own sin. His sin, therefore is wholly his own, chargeable only to himself,—chosen by him unnecessarily, while possessed of a power to choose otherwise.' Again he says, 'Sin universally is no other than selfishness, or a preference of one's self to all other beings, and of one's private interests and gratifications, to the well-being of the universe, of God and the intelligent creation.' 'Selfishness consists in a preference of ourselves to others, and to all others; to the universe and to God. This is sin, and all that in the scriptures is meant by sin.' Now you will notice that the question is, whether all sin,—sin universally,—consists in preference, in action, in choice." p. 5.

In these passages, Dr. Dwight is expressly treating of *the actions* of men, and the fact which he states is, that all the sin which they *exert*, lies in their *voluntary actions;* or in other words, that *the mode* in which their "actual commission of sin" takes place, "under the influence of" that "cause," of sinning, which, according to his theory, exists in their constitutions, is that of selfish *choices*. The position, however, which this fact is employed by Clericus to demonstrate is, that he does not "maintain the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt *nature*, which is *prior* to and *distinct* from all action!" The mode in which this inference is obtained, is simply that of boldly taking for granted the whole question at issue, that what Dr. Dwight taught in respect to the *actions* of the mind, is precisely accordant with his doctrine respecting its nature; or rather that these subjects, and consequently his views respecting them, are identically the same. If this is not thus taken for granted, what force or propriety is there in the argument? How, at the very outset of the discussion, can his doctrine thus stated respecting the actions of men, prove that he does not maintain the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt nature, unless it is assumed that these subjects and his views in respect to them, are precisely the same? But can this method of conducting the inquiry prove satisfactory? Does this writer need to be informed that there is a distinction between the mind itself and its actions; and that to state the views which one entertains on the one subject, is not of course to state what he believes in respect to the other?

The total erroneousness of the conclusion which he thus draws, is apparent from the consideration, that Dr. Dwight, in the very passages with which this discussion is concerned, employs the fact from which he derives that conclusion, to

demonstrate the very doctrine from which it is the object of the conclusion to vindicate him! Thus he alleges the fact that the mind exerts sinful actions, to prove that its nature is corrupt. "Uniform *sin*," he says, "proves uniform *tendency* to sin;" and the "existence" of the unknown cause of sin, which he represents as pertaining to the mind, and as denoted by the terms sinful propensity, corrupt heart, &c. "is proved by its effects,"—the sinful volitions which flow from it. The whole object, indeed, of his theory respecting the depravity of the mind, was to account for its exertion of sinful actions; and *these actions* are all which he presented as proof of the existence of that depravity. Yet in the face of this consideration, Clericus alleges the fact that he exhibits its exercising these sinful volitions, as the mode in which it commits sin, as proving that he did not teach this doctrine of a corrupt or sinful nature, which is prior to and the cause of its exerting sinful actions.

The unjustifiableness of this conclusion may be illustrated by reference to the passage in the "Theology," in which the principal quotation made by Clericus occurs. After having alleged several arguments against the doctrine of Emmons, that God *creates* the sinful actions of men, Dr. D. remarks in relation to the inquiry—why did God permit Adam to fall—"It may be proper to state the difference, which in my own view, exists between permitting, or not hindering sin, and *creating* it. It is this: *In the former case*, man is the actor of his own sin. His sin is therefore wholly his own, chargeable only to himself,—chosen by him unnecessarily, while possessed of a power to do otherwise." —"In the *latter* case, the volitions of man are immediately produced by Omnipotence; are the acts of *God*, himself, and not at all of man; are merely annexed to man as acci-

dents."—"In the former case, God is supposed to create *beings* possessed of the full power to originate any and every moral action."—"In the latter case, he created their *apostacy*." Now if the method of reasoning employed by Clericus respecting *his* views, is at all justifiable, Dr. Dwight can have had no authority whatever for thus representing or insinuating, that Emmons, or any one else, had taught the doctrine, of which he here speaks, that God creates the actions of men. For if, as he assumes, the fact that Dr. Dwight represents men as voluntary in all their actions which are sinful, is proof that he did not teach the doctrine of physical depravity in his theory respecting a cause in their nature of their exerting those actions,—then the fact that Emmons and others teach with equal perspicuity and distinctness that men are voluntary in all their agency, will demonstrate that they did not teach the incompatible doctrine ascribed to them, that God creates those actions. And if this mode of reasoning is correct, the premise and conclusion may be reversed. The fact that Dr. D. teaches that the nature of man is corrupt, is as good proof that he did not teach that men are voluntary, as his teaching the latter is that he did not inculcate the former doctrine; and the fact that Emmons represents God as creating all our actions, is equally demonstrative, that he does not regard us as voluntary in exerting them.

He thus rests the whole of his argument on the assumption, that Dr. D. cannot have taught any thing in respect to the nature of the mind, beyond what appears in his doctrine that men are voluntary in all the sin which they exercise; and proceeding on that assumption—in defiance of the most perspicuous statements and reasoning to the contrary—

alleges what he advances on the latter subject, as completely decisive of the controversy.

It is hardly credible that this mode of determining the inquiry, can meet with approbation. Of what use is even the pretence of reasoning on the subject, if it is to be taken for granted beforehand, that Dr. D. held nothing amounting to the doctrine of physical depravity?—And what is to be believed in respect to the views of Clericus himself, if the principle on which he here proceeds, is to be considered as applicable to his own representations? How many of the important positions advanced in the various essays with which he has favoured the public during the last five or six years, can be regarded as really held by him, if his having taught any thing inconsistent with them, is to prove that they are not his sentiments?

II. His next step is an endeavour to show that Dr. D. uses the terms "unknown cause" "controlling disposition or energy," "sinful disposition," "sinful propensity," "corrupt heart," and others of the kind, not to designate a constitutional attribute of the mind, but simply to denote an act of *choice.*

"Notwithstanding these explicit declarations of Dr. Dwight, that all sin consists in *preference*, it is claimed that he asserts that which necessarily *implies* that all sin does *not* consist in preference or action, but is something *prior to, or distinct from action.* This view of sin has ever been charged upon the orthodox by Arminian and Unitarian writers, and as often denied by the former to be their view of the subject. From this charge, as you know, the Christian Spectator took occasion to vindicate the older orthodox writers some years ago in a controversy with Professor Norton; and I believe to the satisfaction of the clergy generally. It seems however that a few of our orthodox brethren have fallen into the same errors in interpreting

the language of later writers, thus subjecting them to the same groundless charges of absurdity and inconsistency, which Unitarians love so well to make and repeat. I say errors *in interpreting their language;* for here, if I mistake not, is the true source of all diversity of opinion in respect to the views of these writers. I shall, therefore, now attempt to show you that such is the fact in respect to the language of Dr. Dwight, believing that what I shall say will serve to vindicate him and many others, not only from the imputation of teaching the doctrine of physical depravity, but also from the most palpable self-contradiction which must otherwise be charged upon them.

"I advert in the first place to the views of Dr. Dwight, respecting *disposition* as the *cause* of moral action. He often speaks of the cause of moral action; and traces all that is morally excellent in conduct and character; all volitions and all moral actions, to a cause which he designates by the terms *disposition*, *relish*, *heart*, *principle*, &c. Hence the question arises, how could he regard this disposition itself as a state of mind involving *preference* or action? We answer, that whether the fact can be explained or not, it is still a fact that he did so regard it. But the apparent difficulty is easily explained. Mere *verbal* incongruities are not, of course, proof of real contradiction in meaning. Thus Dr. Dwight constantly asserts that the disposition communicated in regeneration is the commencement of holiness in man. In the very paragraph in which he says, "it is the tendency of the mind to all that, which in the character is morally excellent," he calls it an honest and good "heart." Here then, if you interpret his language *to the letter*, you must convict him of the flagrant absurdity of saying that the cause of all moral excellence, is itself moral excellence,—an absurdity not to be charged to such a writer on slight grounds. But the true usus loquendi will solve the difficulty. Thus, when we speak of action or conduct *in this connection*, i. e. when we trace conduct or character as made up of conduct, voluntary actions or moral action, to *the disposition, we always mean those particular or subordinate acts which are dictated by or flow from the disposition*, and this without intending to deny that the *disposition itself* is a state of mind involving *preference*. p. 5. 6.

I shall not descend to a minute criticism of all that merits animadversion in these passages. The "few orthodox brethren," of whom, as we have already seen, the present Editor of the Spectator has now become one,—will undoubtedly appreciate the courteous insinuation that they have fallen into *a Unitarian error*, in ascribing the doctrine of physical depravity to the later and older orthodox writers;—and those who are skilled in the discriminating use of language, will be able to judge how much light is thrown on the question by the statement, that *if he* "*mistakes not*, the true source of all diversity of opinion in respect to the views of these writers is an error" by one or the other of the parties, who ascribe to it precisely opposite meanings—"*in interpreting their language*;" and how much hope of a satisfactory determination of the controversy, is to be derived from the assurance, that he shall "attempt to show that such is the fact."

I shall content myself with simply pointing out the erroneousness of his interpretation.

1. The first objection to it is, that it is a mere assumption of the point in debate. "When we speak of action or conduct in *this connection*,—we *always* mean those particular or subordinate acts, which flow from the disposition," and this, without intending to deny that the disposition itself, is a state of mind involving preference." These are undoubtedly very confident statements, but can hardly be regarded as decisive of the controversy, while the whole point at issue is, what the language in question means—That it would be a task of some difficulty to establish their truth, will be seen from the considerations which are yet to be adverted to.

2. That Dr. Dwight did not regard this "energy" or "disposition" as a voluntary act, is clear from the fact that

he represents its metaphysical nature as "entirely unknown." "These terms," he says, "indicate a cause, which to us is wholly unknown; except that its existence is proved by its effects." "Of the metaphysical nature of this cause I am ignorant." "When we use these kinds of phraseology, we intend that a reason really exists, *although undefinable and unintelligible by ourselves*, why one mind will be the subject of holy volitions, and another of sinful ones."

But its nature plainly could not have been entirely unknown to him, nor have been imagined thus utterly to lie without the sphere of his comprehension, had he regarded it as a mere voluntary act. If it is in truth nothing more nor less than a volition, no reason can be given why we must necessarily be wholly ignorant of its nature, any more than of any other mental act. It were as unphilosophical to represent it as thus a mystery, as to disclaim all knowledge of every other voluntary action, as reverence, love, faith, penitence. Did Dr. Dwight regard these affections as wholly "undefinable and unintelligible," and while enforcing the obligation of habitually exercising them, inform his hearers that still they were utterly incapable of even approaching a comprehension of their nature? Is this "disposition," if a volition, virtuous; and is it thence a duty to exercise it? But how are we to set ourselves to exert it, if totally unable to form a conception of its nature, and incapable even of arriving at the knowledge of its existence, except by inference from the effects to which it gives birth? It will be a formidable task I suspect, to convince the readers of Dr. Dwight, that he was accustomed to inculcate such extraordinary absurdities.

This disposition, if a voluntary act, must of course be a subject of consciousness, and thence its existence and na-

ture be *directly* perceived by the mind, as much as those of any other mental operation. But how is this to be reconciled with the representation that it is wholly "undefinable and unintelligible" by us, and that we have no method of learning its existence, except from its effects. He represents it as an inseparable and essential attribute of the mind, and so necessary to its exerting volitions, that its "existence must be admitted, unless we acknowledge it to be a perfect casualty that any volition is sinful rather than holy." If then it is a voluntary act, and put forth as it must be, in the view of motives, it must be unceasingly exerted by the mind. Are any of the sons or daughters of Adam conscious of such uninterrupted perceptions and affections? And if conscious of them, are they still wholly incapable of defining or comprehending any thing of their nature? But if thus incapable of a knowledge of their nature, how is it that they ascertain that they *are* volitions, and of a sinful or holy character? And much more, if not conscious of them, how is it that they arrive at a knowledge of either of these facts?

3. Dr. Dwight in the most express and absolute manner, represents this "energy" of the mind as the cause of the moral character of *all* its volitions, and thence as existing *antecedently* to them, and when nothing belongs to the mind, except its physical attributes.

"There was, therefore, in the mind of Adam, certainly a cause which gave birth to the fact, that his volitions were virtuous, and not sinful. This cause *of necessity preceded* these volitions, and therefore, certainly existed *in that state of mind*, which was *previous* to his *first* volition. *This state of mind then, this disposition of Adam, existing antecedently to every volition, was the real cause* why his volitions *subsequently* existing, were virtuous. It ought to be remarked here, that

plain men with truth, as well as with good sense, ascribe *all* the volitions of mankind to *disposition*, *the very thing here intended*, as their true cause."

The necessity of this cause to the very existence of a volition thus perspicuously stated, and made the foundation of an argument, and its absolute antecedence in the mind to every voluntary action, be regarded as so obvious and incontrovertible, as to render the denial of it identical with a denial that any cause whatever exists, that its volitions are exerted by the mind.

No room surely is left for doubt in respect to the import of his language on this point. If these perspicuous statements do not demonstrate that he regarded this energy as a constitutional attribute of the mind, existing antecedently to its first, and every subsequent moral action, and so abundantly too, as to render all denial or question of it entirely inexcusable; it is clearly, utterly vain to attempt to ascertain his views, and folly to imagine that any doctrine can be expressed in any language, with certainty.

The supposition that while he exhibited this energy as the cause of *all* volitions, he still regarded it as itself a voluntary act, is preposterous in the extreme. To teach that it is itself such an act, and at the same time that it precedes and is the cause of every volition, is to teach, both that it exists antecedently to itself, and is the cause of its own existence; an extraordinary absurdityto be ascribed to such a writer, and for the purpose of vindicating him from the charge of having fallen into an error in his theories on this subject. Let it not be claimed that he did not mean to teach that this disposition is the cause of *all* voluntary acts, nor to imply that it is not such an act itself. This assumption, made without a shadow of evidence, is wholly refuted by

the fact, that he expressly represents it as essential to the very existence of volitions, and that there is no medium between acknowledging its existence as their cause, and adopting the doctrine that they come into being without a cause. If the reason, as he expressly states, for which he thus adopted and employed it,—to account for the fact that the mind exerts such moral actions as it does—is of any force whatever, it is of course as applicable to the first voluntary actions exerted by the mind, as to any subsequent ones.

4. That Dr. Dwight meant to designate by these terms an original attribute, and not a voluntary act of the mind, is apparent from the fact, as he remarks, that that is the import with which they are generally employed. He states explicitly, that they are not employed by himself to express the fact that men exert sinful actions, but to designate a cause existing in their nature, which renders it certain that their actions will be sinful.

"We speak of human nature as sinful, intending not the actual commission of sin, but a general characteristic of man, under the influence of which he has committed sins heretofore, and is prepared and prone to commit others. *With the same meaning* in our minds, we use the phrases sinful propensity, corrupt heart, depraved mind, and the contrary ones holy or virtuous disposition. When we use these kinds of phraseology, we intend that a reason really exists, although undefinable and unintelligible by ourselves, why one mind will either usually or uniformly be the subject of holy volitions, and another of sinful ones."

And this he represents to be the mode in which the terms are generally used, both in theological discussions and in the common intercourse of life.

"The common method of conducting the investigation of this subject has been, to seek for *some cause in the nature of man*, styled *a*

principle of action, [not an action itself, as Clericus teaches,] to which this effect might be fairly attributed." "Our judgment concerning moral beings is *customarily* formed in accordance with these truths." "This state of mind then, *this disposition* of Adam *existing antecedently to every volition, was the real cause* why his volitions, *subsequently* existing, were virtuous. It ought to be remarked here, that *plain men, with truth as well as with good sense,* ascribe *all the volitions* of mankind to *disposition—the very thing here intended*—as their *true cause.*"

The truth of this representation respecting the use of these terms, cannot be unknown to any at all acquainted with the controversial theology of the last three or four centuries, and is capable of as easy and perfect demonstration, as any fact in the history of human opinions. Thus if there is any one fact in the annals of this subject, which cannot with propriety be questioned, it is as Dr. Dwight states, that theologians generally have proceeded in their discussions respecting it, on the assumption, that the cause that men sin, lies in their nature, and is a corruption or depravation of it, a depraved disposition, or corrupt heart, as it is variously expressed, existing "prior to, and wholly distinct from all action." This is abundantly clear, both from the most copious and explicit definitions and statements, and from the whole tenor of their argumentation. Their method of reasoning universally, has been from the existence of the effect, to the existence of such a cause, and from the moral character of the effect, to the character of that cause. Such is admitted to be the fact by the editor of the Christian Spectator.

"The number is not great however, we believe, of those who think these constitutional propensities to be in themselves sinful. But there are many, who have a confused idea that there must be in man some *distinct* and specific *tendency to sin*, previous to all acts of choice, as there is a tendency to food, to drink, and to the pursuit of

happiness. This they consider as a part of man's nature, like the constitutional properties already spoken of, and they of course consider it as sinful and deserving of punishment."

"Whence then does it arise that Calvinistic writers, *even at the present day*, are occasionally betrayed into unguarded statements of this kind"—"that nature is *itself sinful*" "Several reasons occur to us."

"The first is, *the technical language of a theory*, which is now generally exploded. The statement of Mr. Harvey, that *human nature is itself sinful*, was with few exceptions, *the general statement of Calvinistic divines*, until within the last sixty or seventy years. Such statements were founded entirely on one principle, viz. that our whole race were, in the view of God, *one with Adam;* and that his sin of eating the forbidden fruit, was the sin of each one of his descendants. This utter confusion of personal identity,—this monstrous notion of sinning in the act of another, has now passed away; but the traces which it has left on *the current phraseology of Calvinism*, are yet too apparent. Educated in the use of language formed upon this hypothesis, there are many who still cling to it with a natural fondness, while they reject the doctrine of imputation, from which such language was derived. The old Calvinists were perfectly aware, that the doctrine of a nature which is *itself* sinful, rendered them justly liable to the charge of making God the author of sin, unless that sinful nature could be traced to Adam as its author, by considering the whole race as *one* being with him, and as sinning in *his* first act of rebellion. It was to save them from this charge, that the doctrine of imputation was devised, and they never, we believe, would have dreamed that any of their followers could reject that doctrine, and yet retain their statement, in its literal import, that nature is itself sinful."

"The second reason for these unguarded statements, is *the gratuitous assumption, that the cause of a given effect, must have the same propensities or attributes as the effect itself. A sinful act*, it is said, can spring only from *a sinful cause or nature.*"

"The fourth reason of the unguarded statement that human "nature is itself sinful," is, "a hasty assumption that the *certainty* of man's entire sinfulness from the commencement of moral agency, cannot be accounted for, without supposing a *sinful nature.* On this Mr. Harvey insists in various forms and with great earnestness."—pp. 349, 352, 364, 365.

Here is a full admission of all that Dr. Dwight states, and all that I claim in respect to them,—that Calvinists have as a body, up to the present time, taught that "human nature is itself sinful, prior to and distinct from all action," and that this sinfulness of its nature is the *cause* of the mind's exerting sinful actions; and that they have proceeded in their reasonings respecting it, on "the hasty assumption," that the mind's exerting these sinful actions "cannot be accounted for, without supposing a sinful nature" as its cause.

The representation that this doctrine was founded on the theory of their coexistence and identity with Adam, is however precisely the reverse of fact, and is expressly contradicted by the writer in the same paragraph, as well as refuted by all the other causes alleged by him, of the use of the phraseology and reasoning in question. It were preposterous to found the doctrine of a sinful nature, on a theory of oneness with Adam, or of imputation. If it is based on that theory, on what, I take leave to ask, is that theory itself founded? What solitary consideration ever was or could be alleged to sustain it, that was not derived either from the fact that men sin, or the assumption that their nature is depraved? and if such is the foundation of the doctrine of a depraved nature, how is it to be explained that as this writer himself states, Calvinists have always employed the sinful actions of men, and not their connection with Adam, to prove that their nature is itself sinful?

In place of this, the theory of coexistence and identity with Adam, and of imputation, as is apparent from their nature, as is abundantly shown by Edwards, in his discussion on the subject, and as is confirmed by the representations of every writer without exception, who has inculcated those doctrines,—was devised and promulgated, for the sole pur-

pose of accounting for the existence of a sinful nature, in consistency with the divine rectitude. Thus Edwards in his second chapter concerning objections against the doctrine of native depravity, presents his theory of the mode in which the nature of Adam became corrupt, for the express purpose of vindicating his doctrine from the charge of implying, that God is the author of that depravity: and in the following chapter, states his theory respecting the coexistence and identity of Adam and his posterity, and of the imputation of his sin to them, expressly, in order likewise to account for the transmission of a corrupt nature from him to them, in such a manner as to exempt his doctrine from the charge, in its reference to them of a similar implication of the divine character.

The statement of Calvinistic divines, "that human nature is itself sinful," was not "founded," therefore, at all on the "principle that our whole race were in the view of God *one with Adam*, and that his sin of eating the forbidden fruit, was the sin of each one of his descendants;" but on the contrary, this whole doctrine of coexistence and identity with him, is a mere theory of the mode in which it was supposed the nature of man became thus sinful, and was devised for the sole purpose of accounting for the existence of that sinfulness, without implicating the divine rectitude.—This is in fact, as already remarked, admitted by the Editor of the Spectator, in the passage under consideration.

"The old Calvinists were perfectly aware, that the doctrine of a nature which is *itself* sinful, rendered them justly liable to the charge of making God the author of sin—unless that sinful nature could be traced to Adam as its author, by considering the whole race as *one*

being with him, and as sinning in *his* first act of rebellion. *It was to save them from this charge, that the doctrine of imputation was devised.*"

The doctrine "that human nature is itself sinful," was held, therefore, *before* this theory of coexisting and sinning with Adam was thus "*devised*," for the purpose of vindicating that doctrine; and "the technical language" of that "theory," was accordingly the *consequence* of that doctrine and not its cause; and the fact—pre-eminently distinguished as many of them were, for acuteness, learning, and piety,—that they were driven to the necessity of "devising this utter confusion of personal identity—this monstrous notion of sinning in the act of another," at which credulity itself now stands aghast, in order to sustain their doctrine of a sinful nature, and that they satisfied themselves with it for so many ages, shows how deeply that doctrine was seated in their faith, and how fundamental a position in their estimation it occupied in their theological system.

Notwithstanding the error into which the Editor of the Christian Spectator has thus fallen, in his statement respecting the origin of the doctrine that "human nature is itself sinful," he has my thanks for his explicit acknowledgment, that that doctrine has been taught by the Calvinistic divines as a body, until within a recent period, and is still very generally held by them,—an admission of the more significance, from the circumstance, that the pages of that work have heretofore been studiously closed against all proofs and concessions of this fact, and made the vehicle of a strenuous effort to convince the world, that Calvinists neither do, nor ever did hold that doctrine.

Of the truth of the statement of Dr. Dwight, and of the

Editor of the Spectator, respecting the use of the terms in question, it were easy to adduce a multitude of proofs.—I shall select a few only.

Dr. Woods represents "our becoming sinners," as "owing to *a steady law or principle of our nature*," and as "resulting from *original constitution*," in the same manner as "original strength of mind."

Dr. Griffin exhibits these terms as employed to denote the *foundation* of voluntary actions, and of course as existing antecedently to, and independently of them. Referring to the theories of taste and exercises, which have divided the clergy of New-England for the last forty or fifty years,—of which, however, it would seem that Clericus has never heard—and *founding an argument on them*, he says,

"If you mean by disposition—a taste or principle that is *the foundation* of exercises, then it is still more evident that an object to be beloved must be adapted to an *existing* disposition. Of course it had no influence to *produce* it. If you admit the existence of a taste or principle, and call the object, the motive which moves the heart to action, you will readily allow that the object must be *accommodated to the taste, before* it can become a motive, *that is before it can be beloved.* It must *find the disposition prepared* to entertain it, before it can move the heart.—The power of the object to become a motive, *presupposes* a disposition in the heart to love it; of course it did not *produce* that disposition, even as a second cause." Park-st. Lect. p. 153, 154.

Has Dr. Griffin ever been accused, or suspected of any injustice, or inaccuracy, in this exhibition of the theory of disposition,—in which he represents it as an attribute pertaining to the mind antecedently to its exerting actions, and as the *foundation*, or cause of its exerting such volitions as it does, under the influence of motives? Is there a solitary minister in the Congregational or Presbyterian Church, so

unacquainted with this subject, as not to know that from the days of Edwards to the present time, the orthodox universally,—with the exception of West, Emmons, and their now rapidly decreasing followers,—have held and inculcated this theory ?

This theory was held by Dr. Smalley, and made the foundation of many of his arguments respecting " original and actual sin" regeneration, moral influence, and other correlative topics. Thus he remarks.

" It is agreeable to *common sense*, and seems plainly supposed in several texts and doctrines of the Scriptures, that *depravity of nature* must be *antecedent to all sinful actions*, and the *cause* of them. But if so, there may be a wicked heart, prior to knowledge. There may be *a propensity* to sinful actions in a child, before it has come to years to *choose* the evil, and refuse the good. This may be in us, *as early as we have human souls.*"

" If man is dead in the moral sense, that is, has lost *all principles* of true virtue entirely, he is as absolutely beyond the reach of all means, as to their bringing him to life again, as one that is dead in the natural sense. Moral means, can only work upon such *moral principles*, as they *find* to work upon. They cannot *produce a new nature*, *new principles of action*, any more than natural means, can make new life to themselves in a dead carcase."

This doctrine was taught by President Edwards, in still more strong, if possible, and unequivocal language—

" *Human nature must be created with some dispositions ;* a disposition to relish some things as good and amiable, and to be averse to other things as odious and disagreeable, *otherwise it must be without any such thing as inclination or will*, it must be *perfectly indifferent*, without *preference*, without *choice*, or aversion toward any thing, as agreeable or disagreeable. But if it had any *concreated dispositions at all*, they must be either *right or wrong.*"

He thus represents it as essential, that the mind should be *created* with a disposition, in order to its being *capable* of exerting a volition. Without it, it would have no foundation in its nature for such an exercise. Motives would find "nothing in it to work upon," to use the language of Dr. Smalley, and it must from a physical necessity, no matter what moral influence was brought to bear on it, remain "perfectly indifferent, without preference, without choice."

Is this teaching that this disposition is itself a volition? Clericus protests that it is; and will doubtless continue to repeat the assertion. "The true usus loquendi," he gravely tells us, "will solve the difficulty. Thus when we speak of action or conduct in *this connection*, i. e. when we trace voluntary action to the disposition, *we always mean those particular or subordinate acts*, which are dictated by and flow from the disposition, and this without intending to deny that *the disposition itself* is a state of mind involving *preference*."

President Edwards then, meant to teach in this passage, that "human nature must be created" with *a volition*, in order to its being physically capable of exercising a choice; and accordingly, that *a created volition*, in the mind, is *the physical cause* of all the volitions which it *exercises*, the "foundation" of their existence, the only "principle" in the constitution that moral means can find to "work upon!" And the reason for which our assent to all this is claimed, is as alleged in respect to the similar language of Dr. Dwight, that "if you interpret his language" in any other way, "you must convict him of the flagrant absurdity of saying, that the cause of *all* moral excellence, is itself moral excellence,—an absurdity not to be charged to

such a writer on slight grounds." How the doctrine of a created *volition*, which "must be either right or wrong," can extricate him from that "flagrant absurdity," any more than a created disposition of the same character, Clericus has not thought proper to inform us.

These writers, however, were not guilty of that absurdity. They represented an attribute of the physical constitution, to which they ascribed moral excellence, as the cause of all the moral excellence of *actions;*—not of all moral excellence whatsoever. The flagrant absurdity of making the cause of all moral excellence of actions, itself, a morally excellent action, is identically the theory which Clericus himself endeavours to fasten on them, by making them teach that this disposition—which they represent as the cause of all virtuous volitions—is itself such a voluntary act.

"Human nature," according to this gentleman's interpretation of the language, "must be created with a volition *to relish* some things as good and amiable, and *to be averse* to other things as odious and disagreeable. Otherwise it must be without any such thing as choice!" If this created volition is thus necessary to the exertion of a choice, it of course must exist in the mind in all instances antecedently to its exercising a choice, and be attended by perceptions of the various things, which it is a volition to be averse to, or to relish. A concreated and perpetual perception in every mind, of all the objects toward which, during its whole existence, it exercises, or is to exercise, good or evil volitions, and a perpetually coexisting volition, to relish or be averse to those various objects! This Clericus wishes to persuade the world, was the theory of the immortal Edwards, whom he professes to approve and follow. Can he, however, really believe that Edwards ever

held, or dreamed of such a scheme? Is he himself assured of its truth? Is he able to detect in himself any consciousness of these perpetual and unchangeable perceptions and volitions? Is he conscious, for example, of a clear perception of all the objects, toward which during his future existence, he is to exert good or evil volitions, and of distinct and formal volitions to relish or be averse to those objects? Was he, antecedently to their publication, conscious of the contents of these pages, and of the various volitions to which their perusal has given rise?

I add another passage from Edwards—

"The doctrine of *original righteousness*, or the creation of our first parents with holy principles and dispositions, has a close connection, in several respects, with the doctrine of original sin.—Dr. Taylor's grand objection to this doctrine, which he abundantly insists on, is this, That it is utterly inconsistent with the *nature* of virtue, that it should be concreated with any person; because if so, it must be by an act of God's absolute power, without our knowledge, or concurrence; and that moral virtue in its very nature, implieth the choice and consent of the moral agent, without which it cannot be virtue and holiness; that Adam must exist, he must be created, yea he must exercise thought and reflection, before he was righteous."—He says, "to say that God not only endowed Adam with a capacity of being righteous, but moreover that righteousness and true holiness were created with him, or wrought into his nature at the same time he was made, is to affirm a contradiction, or what is inconsistent with the very nature of righteousness.

This objection to his theory of physical righteousness and sin, Edwards endeavours to overturn. He says—

"With respect to this, I would observe, that it consists in a notion of virtue, quite inconsistent with the nature of things, and the common notions of mankind.

"In the first place, I think it a contradiction to the nature of things,

as judged of by the common sense of mankind. It is agreeable to the sense of the minds of men, in all nations and ages, not only that the fruit or effect of a good choice is virtuous, but the good choice itself from whence that effect proceeds; yea and not only so, but also the antecedent good disposition, temper, or affection of mind, from whence proceeds that good choice, is virtuous. This is the general notion, not that principles derive their goodness from actions, but that actions derive their goodness from the principles whence they proceed; and so that the act of choosing that which is good, is no further virtuous, than as it proceeds from a good principle, or virtuous disposition of mind. Which supposes that a virtuous disposition of mind may be *before* a virtuous act of choice; and that therefore it is not necessary that there should first be *thought, reflection, and choice*, before there can be any virtuous disposition. If the choice be first, before the existence of a good disposition of heart, what signifies that choice? There can according to our natural notions, be no virtue in a choice, which proceeds from no virtuous principle, but from mere self love, ambition, or some animal appetite; and therefore a virtuous temper of mind may be before a good act of choice, as a tree may be before the fruit, and the fountain before the stream which proceeds from it." Vol. vi. p. 267, 268.

Here is a formal attempt, continued through a long series of pages, to demonstrate that a virtuous disposition does and must exist in the mind, antecedently to its exerting a virtuous choice. The proof alleged is, that such a disposition is essential as *a cause*, to the existence of such an effect, that consequently common sense and philosophy require the belief of its existence antecedently to thought, reflection and choice, and render the supposition that there must "first be thought, reflection and choice, before there can be a disposition," unnecessary and absurd. This doctrine—which accords entirely with all the theoretical views on the subject presented by him in his treatises on Original Sin, the Will, and the Affections—is here too perspicuously

taught and zealously defended, to be innocently overlooked or questioned.

It were easy, if necessary, to show that this theory and usage of the terms in which it is expressed, were common both to the principal Calvinistic and Arminian writers, who preceded Edwards, and to the great body indeed of antecedent theologians for many ages. He himself affirms, that "it is agreeable to the sense of the minds of men, *in all nations and ages*." But these passages furnish a sufficient vindication of Dr. Dwight's statement, that he employed the terms in question in the sense in which they are generally used, and that by that usage, they designate an original attribute of the mind, which precedes, and is the cause of its volitions, and not at all a voluntary act itself, as Clericus represents.

5. The supposition that this disposition is a voluntary act, converts the whole scheme into a tissue of mere absurdities.

I deny the existence of any such thing in the mind as a permanent "immanent" volition, and pronounce the whole theory erroneous.

It will be admitted that there are but two classes of truths, at all affecting its moral character, which can be affirmed of the mind; the one expressing what it is, the other what it does or suffers. The first ascribes to it what belongs to its physical nature, the other the operations of that nature.

Now whatever may have been the sense in which the New-England divines, or others have used the terms disposition, taste, relish, and others of the kind, there plainly is no such thing in existence as a permanent "immanent" volition, like that which Clericus wishes us to believe they em-

ployed these terms to denote; and therefore if they used them to designate such a voluntary act, they are convicted of even a more "flagrant absurdity," than the doctrine of physical depravity involves.

The statement of Clericus is, that this disposition, which they represent as the cause of our sinning, is itself a volition, that it is exerted incessantly by the mind, even during sleep, and is the cause of its exerting all other voluntary acts.

Now if such a volition exists in the mind, it undoubtedly must be conscious of it, and enjoy a far more perfect perception of its existence, and knowledge of its nature, than of any of the transient volitions which it successively exercises. I suspect however no being can be found, so ignorant or rash, as to pretend to be conscious of the incessant exertion of such a volition. But if no one is conscious of it, how is its existence to be proved?

If such a volition exists in the mind, it must undoubtedly be exerted, like all others, in view of motives, and they of course like the choice itself, must unceasingly exist in the mind, and be the objects of its attention. Is any one conscious of any such set of permanent perceptions, of making them objects of incessant attention, and of exerting a perpetual volition under their influence? If this doctrine of a perpetual volition in the mind, which is the cause of all subordinate volitions, is true, it follows that whenever it exerts a subordinate volition, it entertains two distinct sets of perceptions, makes them objects of formal attention, and puts forth under their separate influence, two totally distinct volitions. And not only this, but as according to the scheme of Clericus, *every* leading choice, the accomplishment of which requires a series of subordinate volitions, is a permanent choice, it follows that the mind exerts at the

same time as many hundreds, thousands, or millions of distinct volitions, and entertains as many corresponding sets of perceptions, as equal the number of all the leading choices it has ever exercised! This is an extraordinary picture of the mind, to be drawn by one who professes to have studied its philosophy. Has Clericus ever found any one who claims to be conscious of such an innumerable multitude of cotemporaneous perceptions and volitions?

If while the existence of these permanent volitions is taught, it is admitted that the mind is not conscious of their exertion or existence, it will then follow, that immeasurably the greatest and most important portion of its moral agency, is exerted without any consciousness or knowledge of it whatever. The only volitions of which it is sensible, are those which are transient, and separated from each other by intervals occupied by other mental operations, and often during sleep, by considerable periods of total inaction; whilst the innumerable cotemporaneous choices which dwell in it perpetually, and are *the causes* of all its subordinate acts, take place wholly without its concurrence, and lie beyond the grasp of its knowledge. Is this the theory of Edwards, Smalley, Dwight, and their followers? The Calvinistic clergy of New-England, undoubtedly know whether they hold and inculcate such a system, and whether they have been accustomed to employ the terms, disposition, taste, relish, corrupt nature, and others of the like import, and to regard Edwards and Bellamy, Hopkins and Smalley, Strong and Dwight, as using them to express such a theory, and I leave it to their consciousness and self-respect to decide whether such is the fact. I leave it to their good sense also, to determine whether it becomes them to adopt this contrivance of Clericus, to extricate themselves from the

charge of teaching the doctrine of physical depravity, and to suffer it to go forth uncontradicted to the world, that they hold and inculcate such views.

6. The office which he assigns to this volition as a cause, is equally novel and unphilosophical.

It gives birth, according to his account of it, to the subordinate volitions of which it is the cause, simply *as a volition.* It is a choice to choose all the subordinate choices which it causes! It does not produce its effect at all by the mind's *recollecting* that it has exercised such a volition; in which case it would exert its influence simply as a motive, precisely as the perception of any other fact, truth, or object. It were, indeed, no less absurd, to exhibit it as exerting the momentous agency ascribed to it, in that manner. It would be to represent the mind, as making all its subordinate choices,—not from any inducements presented by the objects chosen,—but solely because it had made a choice of them in a former instance;—the sinner, as making sinful choices, not because the objects afford, or promise such gratifications as they do;—and the saint, as placing his affections on things above, not because of any perceptions which he has of God, or the things of his kingdom; but solely because they have respectively chosen those objects before. This, which is undoubtedly sufficiently absurd, is not however the absurdity which this theory involves.—Its doctrine is, that this volition exists permanently, and is an incessant act of the mind, and exerts its influence therefore, solely as a choice. Such must of course be the fact, as there is no other mode, except it be as a mere motive, which involves the difficulty already adverted to,—in which it *can*

act. It is a choice therefore to choose the subordinate choices of which it is the cause. President Edwards's "concreated dispositions," "to relish some things, and to be averse to others,"—were accordingly choices to choose, and not to choose those things respectively. Dr. Dwight's "unknown cause," or "energy of the mind whence volitions flow," was a choice to choose those volitions; and Dr. Griffin's "disposition, which is the foundation of exercises," was a fundamental choice to exert those choices! Has any one beside the author of the Inquiry ever discerned in these distinguished writers, any traces of this extraordinary doctrine? He may, as he professes, have always regarded them as teaching it, and may continue to congratulate himself on his superior knowledge of their theory, and its exact coincidence with his own, which from their unhappy ignorance of "the true usus loquendi,"—has totally escaped the discernment of the "few orthodox brethren," whom he is kindly endeavouring to enlighten. But as the praise of this discovery must confessedly be yielded to him entirely, so I cannot but suspect, the power of detecting any evidence, or feeling any conviction of its truth, is destined in like manner to be wholly confined to himself. If this disposition was thus regarded as a mere volition, by those who taught its existence, how is it to be explained that they universally held, that no moral influence whatever could prevent, nor have any tendency to prevent the mind from continuing to exert it? that it must, if superseded at all, be superseded by a mere physical agency? If it were a mere choice, exerted because of the motives which affect the mind, would not the removal of those motives, and the substitution of others, occasion a change of the choice? And in like manner, on the supposition that it exerts its agency in the

production of subordinate choices, simply as a motive, would not its removal from the mind cut off that influence, and thereby prevent the exertion of those subordinate choices? How will "the true usus loquendi" solve this difficulty?

But Clericus has virtually admitted the total groundlessness of all these pretences respecting the views of Edwards and Dwight, and affixed the seal of error on the "principles of interpretation," which he employs to transmute their theory into his own, by acknowledging that some of the New-England theologians have taught the doctrine of physical depravity, as it is ascribed to Dr. Dwight and President Edwards. This fact, the admission of which—though it is palpable to all other eyes—seems to have been wrung from him only after a severe struggle, he has at length admitted in a variety of passages.

"That some, though I think comparatively few, of the preachers of New-England, have intended, distinctly and unequivocally to assert, that sin pertains to the nature of man, in distinction from every mental exercise or act, I do not deny." "It seems, however, that a few of our orthodox brethren have fallen into the same errors in interpreting the language of later writers." "It is true, indeed, that the Reviewer did understand Mr. Harvey, to mean by the phrase *sinful nature*, that which excludes all action; it is true that Mr. Harvey states the very question to be, 'whether there is no sin except such as consists in a man's own act;' it is true that Mr. Harvey does say that 'nature is itself sinful, without the act, and previous to it;' it is true that Mr. Harvey throughout his argument opposes 'native sin,' and 'natural depravity, to all action, and to voluntary depravity.' But passing all this, and assuming that the Examiner gives a just account of Mr. Harvey's present opinion, it will follow, either that Mr. Harvey has changed his opinion on the main point in this controversy, or that the Reviewer was under a mistake in supposing that what Mr. Harvey *so expressly asserted, and so laboriously*

attempted to prove, was Mr. Harvey's real opinion. If Mr. Harvey has changed his opinion—so be it; and if the Reviewer was *truly under a mistake in supposing that Mr. Harvey said what Mr. Harvey did in fact say*—why so be it."

But how is Clericus to sustain himself in this admission, that the doctrine of physical depravity is indisputably taught by some of the preachers of New-England, if the "true usus loquendi," and "principles of interpretation," which he employs to vindicate his pretences respecting the theology of Dwight and Edwards, are to be the tests by which the views of others are to be determined! Who are the "few," though not in his estimation "respectable theological writers," who have thus asserted, and not unconsciously, or through inadvertence, but who "have intended, distinctly and unequivocally to assert, the doctrine that sin pertains to the nature of man, in distinction from every mental exercise or act." What peculiarity of language have they employed to express it; and what are the reasonings on which they have relied for its support, which can justify him in this accusation? Have they taught it in any other terms, or attempted to sustain it by any other arguments, than those in which it is presented to us in the volumes of Edwards and Dwight? Are their phraseology and reasonings so totally diverse from those of Dwight and Edwards, that the charge of teaching the doctrine is fastened on them, by the same "principles of interpretation," which are employed to vindicate these writers from that imputation? Has Clericus presented any proof that such is the fact? Can he possibly sustain his assumption of it by a shadow of evidence, in respect to a solitary individual? No pretence can be more utterly groundless. I challenge him to name "a theological writer of New-

England," "respectable" or not respectable, whom he can convict of "distinctly and unequivocally asserting the doctrine, that sin pertains to the nature of man, in distinction from every mental exercise or act," without a total abandonment of the ground on which he rests his charge, against those who ascribe that doctrine to Dwight and Edwards, of "errors in interpreting their language," and causeless imputations to them of "absurdity and inconsistency." I challenge him moreover, without a like abandonment of every vestige of "the true usus loquendi," and "just principles of interpretation," on which he relies to sustain his views respecting Dr. Dwight and President Edwards, to prove even that he has himself "distinctly and unequivocally" expressed the doctrine of physical depravity, in any of the language which he has employed for that purpose; or to prove that it can be so expressed, in any other phraseology, which human ingenuity can select.

The language in which he has himself chosen to express it, and in which he represents it as taught by others, is in fact either identically the same, or most manifestly precisely synonymous with that in which it is presented by the very writers whom he endeavours to vindicate from the charge of having taught it. Thus he defines it as "the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt nature, which is prior to and distinct from all action;" "the doctrine that sin pertains to the nature of man, in distinction from every mental exercise or act;" and "that nature is itself sinful;" and represents Mr. Harvey as teaching it, in the phrases "sinful nature," "nature is itself sinful without the act and prior to it." But do any of these phrases assert, that "nature is in itself sinful," any more incontrovertibly or directly, than it is expressed in the current language employed by Edwards?

He represents the phrase "original sin," as "meaning the innate sinful depravity of the heart," and "the conveyance of a corrupt and sinful nature to Adam's posterity, as the grand point of the doctrine of original sin;" and states it to be his object to prove that "their nature is corrupt and depraved with a moral depravity;" and says that "*man as in his whole nature corrupt*, is called *flesh;*" that "flesh does not mean any thing that is *innocent and good in itself*, that only needs to be *restrained and kept in proper bounds*, but something *altogether evil which is to be destroyed*, and not merely *restrained;*" that "the nature of man, as corrupt and sinful, came to be called flesh," in distinction from "*that corruption which consists in inordinate bodily appetites*, because a corrupt and sinful nature is what properly belongs to mankind, or the race of Adam, as they are in themselves, and as they are by nature;" and finally, that by "one thing the apostle makes it plain that by *flesh he means something in itself corrupt and sinful;*" and that is, that he expressly calls it *sinful* flesh. In like manner, Dr. Dwight states, that he speaks "of *human nature as sinful*, intending *not the actual commission* of sin, but a general *characteristic* of man, under the *influence* of which he *has* committed sins heretofore, and is *prepared* and *prone* to commit others;" and that "with the same meaning," he uses "the phrases sinful propensity, corrupt heart, depraved mind."

Or does any of the language, employed by Clericus himself to express the sinfulness of nature antecedently to "every action," present that doctrine with any more certainty, or perspicuity, than the current statements of Edwards, Smalley, Dwight, and Calvinists generally? He feels no hesitation in interpreting Mr. Harvey,

as teaching "that sin pertains to the nature of man, in distinction from every mental exercise or act," when he says, that "nature is itself sinful without the act, and previous to it." But is this a stronger, or more indubitable expression of that doctrine, than the statement of Edwards, that "human nature must be *created* with some dispositions that are either right or wrong," "morally right or vicious;" and that in respect to actions, the true "notion" is, "not that principles derive their goodness from actions, but that actions derive their goodness from the principles whence they proceed; so that the act of choosing that which is good, is no farther virtuous than as it proceeds from a good principle, or virtuous disposition of mind; which supposes that a virtuous disposition of mind may be before a virtuous act of choice; and that therefore it is not necessary that there should first be thought, reflection, and choice, before there can be any virtuous disposition." Or is it stronger than the declaration of Dr. Smalley, "that *depravity of nature*, must be *antecedent* to all sinful actions, and the *cause* of them?"

In like manner, he unhesitatingly represents Mr. Harvey as teaching, "that there is a sinful nature in man prior to, and distinct from all sinful actions," when he "takes the ground, that there must be a cause of all sinful actions, which cause is itself sinful, and which of course is not itself action." Yet that is identically the ground taken by Edwards in the passage just quoted, that "human nature must be created with some dispositions," from which actions "proceed;" that this disposition is of course the cause of these actions, as without it, nature "must be without any such thing as inclination, or will,—must be perfectly indifferent, without preference, choice, or aversion;" and

that this disposition is itself sinful, as it imparts its own character to the sinful actions which proceed from it, and "*must* be either right or wrong," as "it is evident there can be no medium between these."—This assumption is "the ground," as he expressly states, on which all his reasoning in proof of original sin proceeds. It is the sole ground, in like manner, of Dr. Dwight's theory on the subject, as he most abundantly shows; and of the theories and reasonings of Griffin, Smalley, and the whole Calvinistic world, without exception. Such is expressly admitted to be the fact by the Editor of the Christian Spectator, who says, that "the statement of Mr. Harvey, that *human nature is itself sinful*, was, with few exceptions, the general statement of Calvinistic divines, until within the last sixty or seventy years;" and that they were led to this statement, by the "assumption that the cause of a given effect, must have the same propensities, or attributes, as the effect itself."

In thus adopting the very language in question, of Edwards, Dwight, Smalley, and other Calvinists, or that which is precisely coincident with it, for the purpose of expressing the doctrine of physical depravity, and in interpreting it when used by Mr. Harvey, as of course expressing that doctrine, Clericus has, it would seem, shown that he does himself in truth, regard that as its real import, and pronounced sentence of condemnation on all his attempts to fasten on it the opposite meaning, and on all the vaunted "usus loquendi" and "principles of interpretation," by which he endeavours to sustain them.

8. The principle on which he founds his interpretation of Dwight and Edwards, yields as ready aid to overthrow as to support that interpretation, and is in truth wholly subversive of all certainty in respect to the meaning of their language.

The rule which lies at the foundation of all his claims and reasoning, is, that their language must be regarded as having been used according to the "nature of the subject," as "known" or understood, by the interpreter himself; and no meaning ascribed to it, inconsistent with that nature, so understood—

"Here then if you interpret his language to *the letter*, you must convict him of the flagrant absurdity of saying, that the cause of all moral excellence, is itself moral excellence,—an absurdity not to be charged to such a writer on slight grounds. But the true usus loquendi will solve the difficulty."

"The *known* nature of the subject, and the manner of speaking, by rendering the meaning plain, forbid the charge, and even the thought of real contradiction."

"But it will be asked, how then could Dr. Dwight so explicitly assert that *the moral nature* of infants is corrupt. This he might do with entire self-consistency, according to a correct interpretation of his language. The principle is, to limit or restrict the meaning of the word, according to *the known nature* of the predicate or subject.—Accordingly though the word *nature*, in its *primary import*, denotes the constitutional and essential properties of a being or thing, yet there is neither impropriety nor ambiguity in speaking of *the holy nature* of God, or of *the sinful nature* of man. For *the known nature* of the predicate holiness, forbids a meaning which excludes all action, and the word *nature* is used to express strongly the uniformity, or immutability of the character thus described." p. 6, 13, 14.

By "*the known nature of the subject*," is of course meant, its nature as known or contemplated by *the interpreter himself*,—instead of the writer,—as that is the way, and the only way, in which Clericus employs this "principle," and as it were absurd to lay it down as a rule, that the language of an author should be interpreted according to "the nature of the subject" of which it treats, as he

understood it, when the very question at issue is, what were the views of that subject which he entertained, and meant to communicate.

This gentleman is the first interpreter, I suspect, who has ventured to lay down such a canon of criticism. When the question is whether what an author teaches, is *correct* or not, it is proper undoubtedly, and essential to compare what he states, with the nature of the subject, as already known, or understood; that is, in other words, to examine his doctrines and the arguments by which they are sustained, by the knowledge of the subject which we already possess. But who ever before heard, that a critic should make the views which he has already adopted on a subject the criterion by which to interpret the language and ascertain the doctrines of others respecting it?

The absurdity of this rule scarcely needs illustration. It would annihilate, if adhered to, all possibility of communicating and acquiring knowledge through the instrumentality of language, by obliging the learner to see in the terms of his instructor, no other meaning than what accords with the views which he already entertains of the subject treated of. If he has no knowledge at all of it, he of course can affix no signification whatever to the language. If he already has, or imagines himself to have some acquaintance with it, that, whatever it may be, constitutes a limit beyond which, according to the rule, he is not permitted to advance.

It would oblige every learner to regard all those who treat of the same subject, as presenting precisely similar views of it,—whatever he might happen, from "the known nature of it," to imagine these views to be. Their language, not being allowed to express any thing but what accords with "the nature of the subject," as already

"known," it must of course, no matter what it is, nor for what purpose it was employed,—convey to him only that class of ideas which he previously entertained.

But what are to be the results of this rule, if applied to the volume of inspiration? Are all the various classes of mankind, orthodox and heretical, ignorant and learned, to be authorised to interpret the Scriptures according to their preconceived opinions on all the various subjects of which it treats? Are Calvinists, in fact, and Arminians,—for this is the conclusion to which this new "usus loquendi" will carry us,—Unitarians and Universalists, Catholics, in short, and Protestants, of whatever sect or faith, all correct in their several opinions, and equally so?

And, finally, this rule presents a complete justification of Mr. Harvey, in regarding Dwight, Edwards, and other Calvinists, as teaching the doctrine of physical depravity, as he has in fact interpreted their terms, according to "the nature of the subject" as already "known," or understood by himself. It furnishes, also, a similar justification of all those who regard Clericus as having fallen into a heresy, as they have done nothing more than ascribe to his language that meaning, which, according to their views of the subject, is truly heretical. Thus obvious is it, that "the principle" on which he founds his interpretation of the language of Dwight and Edwards, yields as ready aid to subvert as to sustain his representations respecting their views; and, in fact, sweeps away at once all certainty in respect to the meaning of their language, and the nature of their doctrines.

That this gentleman has thought proper to send forth these representations of the doctrines of Dwight and Edwards, is much to be regretted. The object for which he

ventured on the task is not such as to recommend it very strongly to public approbation. It was not in order to the vindication of the Gospel from any misapprehension, or the better elucidation of any of its doctrines, nor for the removal of any obstacle to the usefulness of Dwight or of Edwards; but solely, as is abundantly apparent from his own statements—for the purpose of protecting himself under the shield of their reputation, from the suspicion of having fallen into error.—He had stated in the preface to his Concio ad Clerum, that

"The author of this discourse has no reason to believe, that the views which it contains, are in any essential respect, diverse from those of his brethren who heard it. That the general proposition will meet with the approbation of all who hold the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, he has no doubt. In regard to some of the more specific statements, he supposes that there is in some limited degree, the semblance of controversy rather than real diversity of opinion. It may be proper to remark, that he is not aware of any change in his own views on these points, since he entered the ministry; nor of any departure in any article of doctrinal belief from his revered instructor in theology, the former president of the college. Facts, however, which are extensively known, furnish, it is believed, a sufficient apology for the selection of the topic, as well as for the publication of the discourse."

This declaration was read with surprise, it seems, by his correspondent, as well as many others; and led him to state his belief, that the author of the sermon had "departed from the views of the later divines of New-England," and to express his wonder "particularly," that he "should have disclaimed all departure in articles of doctrinal belief" from Dr. Dwight. He intimates, indeed, in the sermon itself, that he had been accused of heresy, and alludes also in the

"Inquiry," to an imputation of that nature from Mr. Harvey; and it was to exonerate himself from these imputations that the "Inquiry" was sent forth.

This, however, was scarcely the course which wisdom would have dictated. The question which he has to settle with the public, is simply, whether the system which he holds, is correct or not. If his views accord with truth, and are sustained by the Word of God, they are of course vindicated; and it is a matter of no consequence as far as his justification is concerned, whether they coincide or not with those of his predecessor. His orthodoxy depends on his coincidence with the Scriptures, not on his accordance with Dr. Dwight. His agreeing with him does not prove him to be correct.

But if the propriety of resting the justification of his views on their coincidence with those of Dr. Dwight, is thus questionable, the method which he has chosen to vindicate his having "disclaimed all departure in articles of doctrinal belief from this distinguished theologian," is obnoxious to still more formidable exceptions. It is by endeavouring to show, that the phrase, "articles of doctrinal belief," according to the "true usus loquendi," denotes "doctrines in distinction from theories"—he says

"I would say a word respecting the remark in the preface to the sermon, in which the author disclaims all departure from Dr. D. in any article of doctrinal belief. What then are *articles of doctrinal belief?* I answer, those *general truths* which constitute systems of doctrine, as the Calvinistic system, the Arminian system, &c.; and these truths as distinguished from the particular *theories* or hypotheses, by which different writers attempt to explain them in their connections. In other words, they are *doctrines* in distinction from *theories.* The propriety and the frequency of this distinction are

undeniable, since in speaking of Hopkins, Emmons, Dwight, and others, they are always spoken of, notwithstanding their diversities of opinion, in respect to theories, and other minute points, as all Calvinists—all orthodox. This is done solely on the ground of their agreement in those general truths, which properly constitute the Calvinistic or orthodox system, or its doctrinal articles. 'With this distinction in view, it will, I think, be understood, how the author is to be justified in disclaiming a departure from Dr. D. in any article of doctrinal belief.' He might with exact truth, in my own view, have said this in respect to orthodox divines universally.—p. 3, 4.

The first thing meriting attention in this explanation is, that it represents "systems of doctrine," universally, as made up of "truths," in distinction from "the theories and hypotheses," employed "to explain them in their connections." This is certainly important information. All "systems of doctrine," then—no matter what they are—Manichean or Pelagian, Calvinistic or Arminian, Universalist or Unitarian, are made up wholly of "truths," and are of course, therefore, entirely consistent with each other. The subjects to which "the diversities of opinion" of these various and conflicting sects relate, are mere "theories and other minute points," such at least it would seem we are to believe is the fact in respect to Calvinists and Arminians, whose systems he specifies as consisting of "general truths," as distinguished from the particular theories or hypotheses by which different writers attempt to explain them in their connections." As all "truths" are consistent with each other, these "systems" of "truths" must of course be entirely compatible, and so far forth as their several adherents are either Calvinists or Arminians, they must entirely agree in doctrinal belief, or at least can hold only such "articles" as are consistent with each other! If such is indeed the fact, it is as unhappy as it is extraordinary that it was

not discovered at an earlier day. It would have prevented a world of embarrassment and contention. Calvinists and Arminians have certainly regarded themselves as differing totally in respect to "articles of doctrinal belief," have held diametrically opposite views on the same fundamental subjects, and have denounced each other's "doctrines," as well as "theories," without reserve, as heretical and subversive of the gospel. But they had not become acquainted with this gentleman's grand key of knowledge,—"the true usus loquendi,"—by which to ascertain each other's meaning. Had they but followed his rule, and interpreted each other's language according to "the nature of the subject," as "known" or understood by themselves respectively, they would undoubtedly have arrived at this happy conclusion. No wonder, that with this view of the Calvinistic and Arminian systems, Clericus should have felt authorised to say, that "he might with exact truth" "have disclaimed all departure" from "orthodox divines universally," as well as from Dr. Dwight.

The next difficulty attending this explanation of his terms is, that it does not accord with customary usage. The term doctrine is universally applied by theological writers, both to what they themselves hold to be truths of natural or revealed religion, and to what others regard and exhibit as such; without any reference to the question, whether they are expressly taught in the scriptures, or are mere inferences from what they teach, or from the existence and government of the external universe. It is employed to denote *articles of belief* simply, without regard to their nature or origin. Thus the doctrine of eternal generation, the doctrine of imputation, the doctrine of limited atonement, the doctrine of universal salvation, the doctrine of

an eternal sleep, are as customary forms of expression, as are the phrases, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of election. We have examples in the scriptures of a similar use of the term.—"Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines," "with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness;" "after the commandments and doctrines of men;" "the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees;" "the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel;" "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate;" "a doctrine of vanities;" "and doctrines of devils." In claiming therefore that the term properly denotes truths, in distinction from theories, and that "in all fairness," it should have been so understood, he is totally unauthorized. The usage of the scriptures and theological writers universally, is wholly against him. He has no more right to affix to it that signification, than any other that is totally arbitrary,—nor to complain that he was not understood as using it in that sense. The readers of his preface could not with any propriety regard his language as meaning any thing else, than that he had not departed from Dr. D. in any article of belief, whether right or wrong, doctrinal in the sense in which he now wishes the term to be interpreted, or theoretical.

But a still greater obstacle to acquiescence in this explanation is, the fact that the sense thus ascribed to it, is not that in which Clericus himself uses the term. On the very page in which this explanation occurs, he employs it repeatedly to designate hypotheses and theories, in place of truths; and it is used with a similar signification in numerous instances in his late publications. Thus in the paragraph preceding this explanation, he speaks of "the doc-

trine of the imputation of Adam's sin;" "the doctrine of a sinful or corrupt nature;" "the doctrine that sin pertains to the nature of man in distinction from every mental exercise or act." He also uses the phrase, "the doctrine of physical depravity," the "theory or doctrine" that sin is "by the laws of propagation;" "the doctrine that there is no such thing as a wicked heart considered as a permanent source of depravity," quoted from the Examiner; and "Mr. Harvey's doctrine."

Does Clericus wish to be understood as using the term in these passages to denote "general truths," in distinction "from theories and hypotheses;" and thence to be regarded as actually holding the doctrine of imputation, of physical depravity, of the transmission of sin by propagation, and "Mr. Harvey's doctrine?" Or to escape this difficulty, will he admit that that is not the sense in which he employed it, and discard his definition as erroneous?

But it is still more to be regretted that he should have thus attempted to protect himself from the charge of heresy, at the expense of Dr. Dwight's reputation. As no pretence could be more totally groundless than that he taught the theory which Clericus ascribes to him, so none scarcely could be more utterly incompatible with his high character. The time has passed when the construction of these false and fantastic theories can reflect honour on their authors. In philosophy they are justly held to be at best discreditable, as the offspring of ignorance in place of knowledge; and in religion, as profane substitutions of human folly, for divine wisdom. Such especially are those put forth as essential improvements, which in truth fall far behind the attainments of the age, and overlook the most fundamental and well ascertained facts. And of that character pre-emi-

nently is this theory of innumerable cotemporaneous perceptions and volitions pepetually existing in the mind as the causes of all its subordinate voluntary acts, which he ascribes to Dr. Dwight. No powers of intellect nor advantages of condition, are adequate to the support of such a mass of absurdity. Dr. Dwight, with all his talents and reputation,—had he been betrayed by any illusion into the adoption and inculcation of it,—could never have sustained himself under it for an hour ; but would have sunk from his high elevation, to the level of other vain conjecturers, who disregard in their theories, the plainest facts, and subvert the most essential truths both of philosophy and revelation.

And the ascription of it to him, is an imputation on his candour, as well as perspicacity. If this representation of his views by Clericus is just, what confidence can be felt in respect to any of his statements or reasonings ? What certainty is there that his language on other subjects may not have been employed to convey views totally different from those which he is generally understood to express ? The rules and principles which Clericus employs to vindicate him from the charge of having held the doctrine of physical depravity, will prove equally well, either that he never taught any other doctrine which is found on his pages, or that he taught any one which is not to be found there. Such likewise is the fact in respect to President Edwards. Take for example the doctrine of imputation ; and according to the " true usus loquendi" of this writer, it is as gross injustice to ascribe that doctrine to him, as it is to represent Dr. D. as teaching the doctrine of physical depravity. Edwards, indeed, formally asserts the coexistence of Adam and his posterity, their participation in his first act of sin, and the imputation of that sin to them ; and the Editor of the

Spectator pronounces it a "monstrous notion," and an "utter confusion of personal identity." According to the rule of Clericus, however, his language is to be interpreted according to "the nature of the subject" as "known" by ourselves, and "the known nature of the subject" "forbids the charge, and even the thought of real contradiction;" "for the nature of the predicate sin, forbids a meaning which excludes all action." No doctrine, however perspicuously stated, or ably sustained, can stand before this summary process.—There is no alternative, therefore, but either totally to reject this writer's representations, or to abandon all assurance that Dr. Dwight's views can be certainly known on any subject; and consequently all confidence that we have in his works, any sure proofs of his wisdom, learning, or piety.

That any should yield such implicit trust to these representations, as to draw such conclusions against Dr. D., may seem a very improbable extravagance. Yet it is far from being impossible, that to many who have not the means of ascertaining the truth, they may seem to be authorized. What other conclusion could his numerous foreign readers, for example, naturally adopt, on being informed that this representation of his doctrine is from the pen of a theological professor in the very institution over which he lately presided, who ought therefore to be accurately acquainted with his views; that it has been sanctioned by another professor also of that seminary, on the pages of the Quarterly Christian Spectator; and, finally, that for so long a period it has been suffered to pass uncontradicted. In pointing out these misrepresentations, therefore, of his views, I am contributing, I flatter myself, to the vindication of his reputation, as well as subserving the cause of truth.

THE CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR'S

REVIEW

ON THE MEANS OF REGENERATION.

THE articles under this title, in the Christian Spectator for 1829, are well known to have proceeded likewise from the author of the Concio ad Clerum, and are indeed expressly ascribed to him in the Inquiry. They will, accordingly, in the observations which I am about to offer on them, be regarded as his, although the Editor of the Spectator has in his last number, undertaken the task of their vindication, very much as though their responsibility belonged to himself.

They are characterised by even more than their author's usual obscurity, and furnish examples, like the Inquiry, of unauthorised assumptions, erroneous principles, and reasonings which are inconsistent and inconclusive. They present, also, some important admissions and statements; the most essential of which however, and those that impart to the discussion its chief value,—perhaps from the consciousness of their inconsistency with some positions which he has long endeavoured to establish, and coincidence with others which he has been reluctant to admit,—are uttered with but a faint and irresolute voice, and are exhibited as conclusions from positions, with which they have little connexion.

The perspicuousness or obscurity with which an author writes, corresponds with the energy or feebleness of his perceptions. If he puts forth only perplexed and indeterminate statements, or uses language without meaning, it is apparent that his apprehensions are embarrassed with equal cloudiness and uncertainty. To the reproach of this fault, the reviewer is unfortunately eminently obnoxious in respect to many of his most essential positions. His definition of "using the means of regeneration," may be taken as an example.

"The question then naturally arises, what are the acts which constitute using the means of regeneration? We answer that by using the means of regeneration, we do not understand any acts which either precede, or are to be distinguished from regeneration itself, when this term is used in its more common popular import; but we understand those acts, which together with another act, are in the more popular use of language, included under the term regeneration." p. 16.

This definition, which professes to be the result of an accurate analysis of the mental states and acts which are involved in or immediately connected with regeneration, and on which the statements and reasonings through a long series of pages essentially depend, includes by express specification, a totally unknown quantity, the true value of which, the eyes of Argus himself would require an additional gift of perspicacity to ascertain. "By using the means of regeneration, we do not understand any acts which either precede, or are to be distinguished from regeneration itself, *when this term is used in its more common popular import.*" What, then, is its common and popular import? for the language implies, and he elsewhere expressly admits, that it is used with very various significations. What, espe-

cially, is the import with which it is used, when employed in its *more* common and popular sense? Certainly not such as is here represented,—that any *acts* are included under it; as according to the popular doctrine, as he has himself stated it, the mind is *passive* instead of acting in regeneration. What then are the acts—those of God, or of man—which are to be "distinguished" from regeneration, when used in that particular sense? and what is the rule, usage, or propriety, by which they are to be so distinguished? "But we understand those acts which, *together with another act*, are in the more popular use of language, included under the term regeneration." But what, again, is that more popular signification? What are the acts which are thus included under it? And what, especially, is that other undefined act, with which they are thus coupled? Is it distinct from and additional to those, or only one of those acts themselves; and if so, which of them? But it were a formidable task, to determine all the queries which need to be settled, in order to ascertain the exact import of this extraordinary definition.

The following rhetorical passage, in which he treats of "a desire of an infraction of a principle, that shall separate an object of an affection, from a drawback of damnation," is not, to say the least, in the usual, nor the happiest style of metaphysical discussion.

"And what is this, but desiring such an infraction of the principles of eternal rectitude, as shall separate from the present attractive object of the sinner's affections, the appalling drawback of future damnation?"

He at length winds up the argument with the following recapitulation, showing that his premise, his proof, and his

conclusion, are unfortunately only varying modifications of the same thing.

"We have thus attempted to show, that all the acts of the sinner which respect divine truth, and are performed while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, are dictated by the selfish principle and have an exclusive tendency to subserve the selfish purpose of the heart."

That is, acts that are dictated by selfishness, and are selfish, *are selfish.*

These blemishes—which abound in almost all his pages—though thus prejudicial in such discussions, and reprehensible in one in a station like his, are not however to impair the force of any of his just reasonings, nor detract from the dignity of the truths which he advances. I have thus glanced at them, simply, that as well for his own, as the credit of the institution with which he is connected, he might guard against their future recurrence; and shall leave them for the more important task of noticing some of the principles and positions which are the basis of his protracted discussion.

I. One of the most noticeable of its characteristics is, that most of its important statements and reasonings rest on the assumption, or rather assertion, of the fact that the doctrine of physical depravity, and the various erroneous positions which are naturally connected with it, are generally held by the Calvinistic clergy.—A fact sufficiently extraordinary, when it is recollected with what diligence and perseverance he has laboured for the last six years, to convince the public that no such views are, or ever were held by Calvinists as a body. He introduces the discussion by remarking that,

'We think the gospel is *not now*, as it was by apostles, brought

before the human mind in the character and relations of *a cause which is to produce an immediate effect. It is extensively true that preachers do not preach, and hearers do not hear* the gospel with such an impression of its efficacy. The sword of the spirit is used under the conviction that God in his sovereignty has withdrawn from it its ethereal temper, and the anticipation of its powerlessness, by palsying the hand that wields it, becomes the means of its own fulfilment."

"The conviction of the present practicability of duty, is indispensable to the present performance of duty, and no pressure of obligation is sufficient to counteract the paralyzing persuasion of the utter uselessness of effort. The opposite conviction is, that it will not now be done, and the belief that this is certain, though consistent with the obligation of duty, is fatal to every effort requisite to the present performance of duty. *And such we think is the actual belief adopted and acted upon by great numbers.*"

" In proof of some great dissimilarity between the mode of preaching the gospel in the apostolic age, and at the present day, we ask whence the undeniable fact of the straight-onward unembarrassed call to repentance by apostles, contrasted with the conscious hesitation and embarrassment in uttering the same unqualified message on the part of *many a modern preacher?*"—" We believe the true answer to these inquiries is to be found in some peculiarity in *the mode* of preaching the same gospel in these latter days; a peculiarity which so falls in with the tendency of the human mind to avoid the pressure of present obligation, as to result in the anti-apostolic impression on *the minds of many, that nothing is to be done in the work of conversion*, but quietly to wait for a divine influence, as the first cause of all doings that are not worse than useless." " And why, we may ask, does the inspired narrative of the effects of the gospel, exhibit it as uniformly, if effectual at all, of such sudden and powerful efficacy upon its listening hearers? Such however are not the most common views entertained respecting the preaching of the gospel in our days. Such is not the honour conferred by *the people* on God's own institution; such is not the magnifying of their office by *the ministers themselves.* There is, *if the more prevalent opinion be correct*, an indispensable, long, progressive preparation to be made. There is the waiting attitude of dependent recipients, ready to take what it may please a sovereign God to give.—But *where is the active moral*

agent, applying his whole mental energy to the immediate work of turning to God?"—pp. 2, 3, 4, 5.

Now what is all this, but admitting and affirming that the doctrine which theologians, almost without exception, have taught for the last fifteen centuries, that man is naturally incapable, from the depravation of his physical constitution, of exercising any obedient acts, and that moral means are consequently utterly incompetent to excite him to exert such actions, is still as generally held and taught by them; and has finally come to be universally believed, and almost instinctively, as it were, acted on as indubitably in accordance with truth?

"The error then which in our view is the basis of these desires of the sinner, respects *the nature of a change of heart, and the manner of its production by divine agency.* Of the nature of this change *many a sinner has no just conceptions.* The extent of his views respecting it, is that it is some change, in consequence of which, the service of God would be rendered easy and even delightful; *a change which is produced by the power of God exerted upon him as its passive subject; a change of course which involves no act of self-denial, no voluntary sacrifice—but rather a change like one supernaturally wrought in some of his constitutional propensities or tastes for certain kinds of food or drink*, rendering agreeable what is now unpleasant or even loathsome. Hence the practical assumption on the part of a sinner, that his exemption from punishment depends not at all on what *he* does; but in the most absolute and exclusive manner on what *God* does."—"The affections of his heart, as he supposes, remain fixed on their object the present moment, simply because God has not detached them from it. He makes no effort to withdraw them, since God without such effort on his part must, in his view, do this, if it be done at all. Under this conviction of his own passivity, each successive moment finds him cherishing still his idolatrous affection for the world." p. 28, 29.

But are not these views "of *the nature of a change of heart, and the manner of its production by divine agency*," the result of the doctrine of physical depravity, and of that only? Is there any other theory, from which they have ever been deduced, or with which they are at all compatible? And are they not identically the views which have been entertained by Calvinists universally, and inculcated by Edwards, Smalley, Dwight, Griffin, and this gentleman himself?

"The necessity of this distinction then, is occasioned by the unguarded manner in which the gospel has sometimes been preached. We refer to the exhibition which we think is *often* made of the MODE of the sinner's dependence on the grace of God in regeneration; a MODE which dispenses with all *preliminary* acts on the part of the sinner, and thus denies the doctrine of using the means of regeneration."

"Nor can we well suppress our surprise at the *no uncommon* opinion, that the change in regeneration has no necessary connection with truth, or with any acts of the sinner employed on the objects which truth presents; and that the change itself is of such a nature, and takes place in such a manner, that it is quite immaterial whether the sinner be asleep or awake; we had almost said, whether he be dead or alive."

—"Very unguarded language is *often* used on this subject. That God can regenerate sinners without the use of means on their part; that the use of them has no necessary connection with the event itself; that God can accomplish this change without truth, or attention to truth, as he can rear a harvest without the cultivation of the earth, or the planting of the seed, *are assertions which are frequently made, and which are supposed to express a truth essential to secure the praise of this divine work to Him to whom it is due.* And if we mistake not, it is this supposed practical bearing of this view of the subject, rather than legitimate evidence, *which has so extensively exalted it into an article of faith.*

"Where then is the warrant for *the opinion*, that before there can be

the least possible fitness in God's moral government to secure its end, viz. right moral action in men, He must *literally recreate them, and qualify them to perform right action, by changing the substantial properties* of their very being." "*Those then whose opinions we now controvert, must maintain that the Scriptures teach the necessity of a change in the physical properties of the human soul, in order to secure holy action in man.* We ask then how it happens that they come to think so; how is it that they can so interpret the language of the sacred volume? In our view it is owing to their philosophy.

"As the basis of these scriptural [?] doctrines then, we say, they assume as a fundamental and infallible principle *that every event must have a cause*—that the cause of voluntary action is an *efficient* cause; i. e. they maintain that the reason why a man performs sinful action, rather than holy action, and *vice versa, is a cause which in its very nature precludes all power in man to act otherwise than he does;* a cause which is connected with its effect by the same kind of necessity, which connects causes and effects in the physical or material world. *Hence this form of their doctrine, that man must possess a sinful nature, as a part of the very substance of the soul, to be the cause of sinful action; and also a holy nature, as a part of the very substance of the soul, to be the cause of holy action.*"

Who now are they who thus hold and teach these reprobated doctrines, and have succeeded in thus diffusing the fatal belief of them through the community? Are they Arminians will it be pretended, who, though they hold the doctrine of physical depravity, yet teach that God has provided a remedy for this incapacity of nature, by the grace which he imparts to all? Is it to them that the discussion is addressed; and is it they, as the teachers of this doctrine are here represented, who constitute the great body of our clergy, and enjoy so commanding an influence, as to give this extraordinary currency to their views? Or, are they "Unitarians," who "love so well to make and repeat"

these "same charges of absurdity and inconsistency" against Calvinists? This will not be prenteded.

They are Calvinists then, and Calvinists alone, against whom he alleges these "charges—which Unitarians love so well to make and repeat," and which when his Inquiry made its appearance, none but "Arminian and Unitarian writers" and "a few of our orthodox brethren," who "have fallen into the same errors in interpreting the language of later writers," were rash enough to bring against them.

Besides, these doctrines of constitutional depravity, physical regeneration, and the total unadaptedness of moral means to change the heart, are in truth, as we have seen, identically the doctrines of Calvinists as a body, and have been held and strenuously maintained by them in every period of their history. "This form of their doctrine," which he represents as the result of their false "philosophy," is precisely that in which they have universally exhibited it, and this stigmatized method of reasoning from their "fundamental and infallible principle," is that which they have uniformly employed to sustain it. Such I have already shown to be the fact in respect to Dwight, Smalley and Edwards, who expressly state it as the basis of their theory on the subject; and such as we have seen is affirmed by the Editor of the Spectator, to be the fact in respect to the Calvinists in general.

The reviewer thus, so far forth as *this* discussion is concerned, regards the Calvinists at large as indubitably holding the doctrine of physical depravity, and the various fatal errors which it immediately involves, and as having taught it so seriously, so clearly, and so incessantly, as completely to establish it in the common faith, and give it an almost resistless influence over the understanding, the

conscience, and the heart; and it was solely his overpowering sense of the existence and extent of these evils, that prompted him to this laborious effort to arrest their progress, to disentangle the truth from misapprehension, to revive the apostolic mode of preaching the Gospel, and so intensely to illuminate the whole subject by the light of his "true usus loquendi," and accurate analyses, and reasonings, as to leave those without excuse who hereafter continue these fatal perversions.

This is undoubtedly sufficiently extraordinary—considering the boldness with which, both before and since the utterance of these representations, he has affirmed, and the efforts with which he has endeavoured to prove, that this same doctrine is *not* held by the Calvinists either of New-England, or elsewhere; and that the ascription of it to them is a mere Arminian or Unitarian misrepresentation, the result of ignorance of "the nature of the subject," of the "true usus loquendi," and of the history of New-England theology. Such was his representation in his disquisitions in the Spectator on the views of Edwards, Calvin, and others, respecting original sin, and such likewise are the intimations in his sermon and its preface, and the statements in his Inquiry.

He thus stands before the world the bold and reiterating assertor of these two contradictory representations. Which of them—it is a matter of some curiosity at least to know—are we to regard as exhibiting his real views; or does he verily entertain them both, and hope to accomplish the delicate task of sustaining them? If the New-England divines are truly regarded as holding the doctrine of physical depravity, his zealous efforts to disprove it, when alleged by others, must, it would seem, as a matter of course,

be given up as erroneous. If they are not regarded as holding it, then in adopting—after so many years of inquiry and discussion—" the groundless charge" of it " which Unitarians love so well to make and repeat," he is, it would seem, guilty at least of as gross and more inexcusable injustice, than he has ascribed to them. Or, are we in determining the truth or error of these conflicting statements, to follow the rule of his " true usus loquendi," and by interpreting his language according to " the nature of the subject," as " known" by ourselves, ascribe to it the same meaning in each instance, and thus make it the instrument of uttering but one and the same representation? I leave it to the reader to form his own opinion on the subject, and to him to offer such explanations as he may deem it to admit or require.

II. The next topic meriting notice, is " the import" with which he erroneously exhibits the term regeneration, as used by Calvinistic divines.

He represents it as denoting in its common, popular import,—especially in formal discussions respecting the nature and cause of the effect, of which it is the name,—a series of perceiving and voluntary acts—

" By using the means of regeneration—we understand *those acts which together with another act*—are in the more popular use of language, included under the term *regeneration*. Regeneration considered as a moral change of which man is the subject,—in popular use denotes, what in a more analytical mode of speaking, may be viewed and described as made up of several particular acts and states of mind, or as a series of such acts and states, which are yet so related and connected, that for all ordinary purposes, they are sufficiently defined, when spoken of in combination, and as constituting *one act* under *one* name."

Such as are at all acquainted with the doctrines and language of Calvinists on this subject, can scarcely need the aid of proofs from me, to discern that all this is precisely the reverse of fact. So far is that from being the sense which Calvinistic usage assigns to the term, or with which the Calvinistic theory on the subject even permits it to be literally employed, that not a solitary individual of that class—I venture to believe—can be pointed out, who has used it, unless inadvertently and inconsistently with his theory on the subject, with that signification—the disciples of West and Emmons, who are not Calvinists on *this* subject, being of course left out of the question; or if any bearing that designation can be found, who have employed it in that sense, in any other way than inconsistently with their own theoretical views, that fact alone sufficiently demonstrates that their views, so far as this subject is concerned, are not in truth Calvinistic, and that their use of the terms consequently is of no authority in determining what its Calvinistic sense is. All this is abundantly apparent from the theory of Calvinists in respect to regeneration as well as from the most distinct and copious statements and definitions—

The theory of Calvinists, is and ever has been, that the mind, instead of acting, is *passive* in regeneration. This the reviewer himself, in the foregoing passages, represents as the prevalent doctrine; and had he not admitted it, it is too obviously the fact, to need to be very laboriously proved.—He says, *such an "exhibition is often made of the mode of the sinner's dependence on the grace of God in regeneration," as "dispenses with all preliminary acts on the part of the sinner*, and thus denies the doctrine of using the means of regeneration;" and *that it is*

"*not an uncommon opinion that the change in regeneration has no necessary connexion with truth, or with any acts of the sinner employed on the objects which truth presents: and that the change itself is of such a nature, and takes place in such a manner, that it is quite immaterial whether the sinner be asleep or awake; we had almost said, whether he be dead or alive.*"— "*Of the nature of this change many a sinner has no just conceptions. The extent of his views respecting it is, that it is a change which is produced by the power of God exerted upon him as its Passive Subject; a change like one supernaturally wrought in some of his constitutional properties.*

The prevalence of this doctrine is thus adverted to by Dr. Cox, in his late sermon on the subject.

"One of the capital mistakes in theology, one that has been valued as a limb of orthodoxy, but which may well be viewed as the great paralyzer of preaching, is that of the alleged *passivity* of the subject in regeneration." "Such passivity, if admitted, would render it impossible to show any harmony or accordance between regeneration and accountability—it would paralyze the ministrations of the desk just in proportion as the truth was manifested; it would confound those whom we wish to convince and persuade, and it would counteract, if not banish from our spheres, the genuine influences of the Spirit of God. *This I am persuaded it has done in thousands of deplorable instances.*"

To this doctrine of passivity in regeneration, the Calvinists were necessarily led by their theory of depravity, which placed the cause of the mind's sinning in the physical constitution, and consequently made the removal of it by regeneration, to consist in a change of that constitution, in the accomplishment of which, the mind itself of course could not act as the efficient, nor co-operate as a secondary cause, but must necessarily be wholly passive. Thus the reviewer himself says, they founded their doctrine on

the assumption, " that *the cause of voluntary action, is an efficient cause*," and " maintain that the reason why a man performs sinful action, rather than holy action, *and vice versa*, is *a cause which in its very nature precludes all power in man to act otherwise than he does*,"—which of course then lies in his physical constitution, and if he is unrenewed, is nothing less than an absolute physical incapacity for exercising obedient actions.—" Hence," he proceeds, " this form of their doctrine, that man must possess *a sinful nature as a part of the very substance of the soul, to be the cause of sinful action; and also a holy nature as a part of the very substance of the soul, to be the cause of holy action.*" The " many a sinner," therefore, who " has no just conceptions of the nature" of regeneration, is nevertheless forced irresistibly by the Calvinistic theory of depravity, to regard it as " wrought in some of his constitutional properties," in order that " *a part of the very substance* of the soul," may be converted into " a holy nature," so as to become " the cause of holy action."

This theory of passivity resulted necessarily, in like manner, from their doctrine that regeneration is produced by a divine influence, exerted immediately on the mind, and independently of all moral means. As the only capacity for action, which the mind possesses, is that of a moral agent, and the only mode in which it can exert that capacity, is that of volition, and of course therefore *under the influence of motives;* it follows necessarily, that it can have no agency whatever in giving birth to those effects, the mode of whose production is such, as precludes the intervention of motives.

Thus manifest is it from their whole theory on this subject, that the Calvinists regard regeneration as consisting in

a change of " the very substance of the soul itself," and not in the manner of its acting. They of course therefore employ the term to designate such a change of the physical constitution, and not a voluntary act, or series of acts exerted by itself, such as the reviewer represents as included under its " common popular import." Accordingly it were easy to show by a multitude of quotations, both from the later and older divines, that the term in its technical and literal Calvinistic meaning, denotes a change, or what at least involves a change, of " the substance of the soul itself," produced by the power of God exerted upon it as its passive subject," usually described as " the implantation of a holy principle," or " holy disposition," or " the communication of holiness to the mind.". A few only will be selected. Dr. Dwight says,

" This change of heart consists in a relish for spiritual objects, communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost." " The Spirit of God does not, in my view, when he regenerates mankind, create in them any volitions whatever, but merely communicates to them the relish for spiritual objects, which has been here mentioned." " If the volitions of man are not immediately created, they are either caused by something *in man*, or they are casual. But they are not casual.— There was therefore *in the mind* of Adam certainly, a cause which gave birth to the fact, that his volitions were virtuous and not sinful. This cause of necessity preceded these volitions, and therefore certainly existed in that state of mind which was previous to his first volition. This state of mind then, this disposition of Adam existing antecedently to every volition, was the real cause why his volitions subsequently existing were virtuous."

" In regeneration the very same thing is done by the Spirit of God for the soul, which was done for Adam by the same Divine Agent at his creation. The soul of Adam was *created* with a relish for spiritual objects. The soul of every man who becomes a christian is *renewed* by the communication of the same relish. In Adam this dis-

position *produced* virtuous volitions. In every child of Adam, who becomes the subject of virtue, it produces the same effects."

"This change is *the source* of new views of spiritual and divine objects.—It has been extensively supposed that the Spirit of Grace regenerates mankind by communicating to them new, clearer, and juster views of spiritual objects.—Yet it appears to me clear that this account is not scriptural nor just. Without a *relish* for spiritual objects, I cannot see that any discoveries concerning them, however clear and bright, can render them pleasing to the soul. If they are unpleasing in their very nature, they cannot be made agreeable by having that nature unfolded more clearly. He who disrelishes the taste of wine, will not relish it the more, the more distinctly and perfectly he perceives that taste.—To enable him to relish it, it seems indispensable that his own taste should be changed, and in this manner fitted to realize the pleasantness of wine.

"But the great difficulty in the present case is this; the nature of the object perceived is disrelished. The more then it is perceived, the more it must be disrelished of course, so long as the present taste continues. It seems therefore indispensable that in order to the usefulness of such superior light to the mind, its relish with respect to spiritual objects should first be changed. In this case the clearer and brighter the views of such objects are, the more pleasing they may be expected to become to the mind.

This I apprehend, is the true progress of this work in the human soul. A relish for all spiritual objects never before existing in him, is communicated to every man who is the subject of regeneration, by the Spirit of God." "This change is instantaneous." "Regeneration, according to every scheme, is the commencement of holiness in the mind." "All that can be truly said to be gradual, with respect to the subject is, *either that process of thought and affection which precedes regeneration*, or that course of improvement in holiness by which it is followed. *But neither of these is intended in the Scriptures, nor ought to be intended in the conversation and writings of Christians, by the word Regeneration.*"

"That act of the Spirit of God by which this disposition is communicated; that is, the act of regenerating men; and the disposition itself which is communicated, I cannot be expected to describe.

Neither of these things can in the abstract be known, or even contemplated by such minds as ours. *Not a single idea* could *ever be formed concerning the nature or existence of either, were they not discovered by their effects.* It may however be useful to repeat, that what I intend by this disposition is, *the cause which in the mind of man, produces all virtuous affections and volitions.*" Theology, Ser. 74. 76.

Nothing can be more obvious than that *no acts* of the mind, either of perception or volition, are included under the term regeneration, as used in these passages; but that, on the contrary, it is employed to designate a mere change of the physical constitution. This is seen from his denial that motives have any instrumentality in giving birth to it,—as no voluntary acts are ever exerted except under their influence. He represents it, moreover, as the implantation of *a relish* for spiritual things, by which objects of that kind become motives, and that it is through that medium that it comes to be the cause of holy volitions. Of course, then, it must exist antecedently, not only to the exertion of these volitions, but also to *the perceptions* themselves of the objects toward which it exerts them. It takes place then previously to, and wholly independently of these mental operations,—which are the only modes in which the mind acts,—and must therefore consist in a mere change of the nature of the mind itself.

The term is used with the same import by Dr. Griffin, in his Park-street Lectures.

"It is impossible, then, that a new disposition should be produced in a natural (I may add or even in a supernatural) way, by the influence of motives. Motives, as objects of love or aversion, occasion the heart to act *according to its existing disposition;* and there their power ends.

"The power which changes the heart is immediate, acting through no second cause, producing its effect by no instrument."

"It may then be asked, why should a second cause intervene, which has no influence? If divine power produces the whole effect, why couple itself with a powerless cause? These questions would be unanswerable, if there was nothing to be done but to create, and continue the new disposition; but there are views, and affections, and acts of the will, and motions of the body, to be produced, or the disposition is utterly useless. In the production of all these, both in their beginning and in all the degrees of their increase, truth, when it finds the disposition favourable, has the proper influence of a second cause." "Now the word of God may be considered as acting on the mind at three different stages: viz. before regeneration, at the time of conversion, and in the progress of sanctification." "At the time of conversion, the truths of the word are the instruments of producing all the thoughts which fill the understanding, all the motions of the heart, the will, and the body; and are thus the instruments of producing the whole of that *turning* which the word imports." "Regeneration is the formation of the *eye*, but light is necessary to actual vision. Thus conversion is brought about by the instrumentality of the word."

No definition of the term regeneration can be framed, that shall more absolutely, than this representation of it, exclude from it all acts of the mind, and restrict its import to a mere change of its nature produced by supernatural power. *The obedient acts* of the mind are exhibited as *the effects* of regeneration, and distinguished from it accordingly by the term conversion; and such is unquestionably the meaning with which these terms are customarily employed. Dr. Cox, in the sermon already referred to, represents it as one of the "false and ruinous" dogmas very generally taught, that

"Regeneration is the implantation of *a certain kind* of 'principle of holiness,' which is incapable of definition or demonstration, and has no connexion with human consciousness; which *precedes all active mental holiness*, and is antecedent also to all 'the fruit of the spirit,'

as specified in the New Testament; in the susception and sustentation of which, the Creator is sole as well as sovereign agent; *man no agent at all, but only a passive receiver, an unconscious subject* of the mysterious gratuity; and which is the happy contrary of *a principle of sin*, which is concreated with us, and is the permanent fund of all our depravity, in which also we are passive—though quite active in exercising all the wickedness which flows (full copiously) from such an inserted fountain, and which has its residence and location somewhere in the texture of the soul, which is itself a very wicked thing some how physiologically, in the very nature of it, antecedent to any agency of ours."

"Regeneration consists in *some secret physical motion on the soul*, which restores its dislocated powers, and cures the connatural diseases of its texture."—"The soul is *passive, entirely passive, and God the sole agent in regeneration*." p. 6.

The reviewer's representation, that the term in its "common popular import," denotes perceiving and voluntary acts of the mind, is thus precisely the reverse of fact, and the reverse likewise of the views which he himself on the same pages exhibits, as generally entertained respecting the nature of regeneration itself.

By what inadvertence he fell into this total misapprehension of so plain a fact, or what advantage can result from it, it is not easy to conjecture. The New-England clergy will not be very likely to be betrayed by it, against the testimony of consciousness in respect to themselves, and the most notorious facts in respect to their cotemporaries and predecessors, into the assumption that the meaning thus ascribed to the term, is that with which it has been customarily used.

This representation of its import being thus erroneous, the various statements and reasonings which he advances on the assumption of its truth, of course fall to the ground.

If, however, on the other hand, his claims respecting its import are conceded, it then becomes a matter of scarcely less difficulty, to discern with what propriety it is, that he dwells on other statements and arguments respecting the subject, with so much minuteness and zeal. Thus immediately after presenting us with this account of the popular import of the term, he proceeds with an air of great originality, as though advancing in an entirely unexplored path, to state and prove, that there *are* mental acts and states which precede regeneration; or which, at all events, in the order of nature, precede *the last act in that series* which the term, according to his account of it is employed to denote. Thus he says:

"Applying the word regeneration then in some limited import not precisely defined, we AFFIRM that *there are and must be certain mental acts and states*, which, in the order of nature at least, precede regeneration, or which precede, as we propose to use the term regeneration, that act of the will or heart, in which God is preferred to every other object. Of these mental acts and states, our object does not require that we give an accurate analysis. It is sufficient for our purpose, *to show that there are* such acts and states, and that we so far describe them, that it may be understood what class of mental acts we designate, as preliminary to regeneration, and as constituting using the means of regeneration. We proceed to say then, that before the act of the will or heart, in which the sinner prefers God to every other object, the object of the preference must be viewed or estimated as the greatest good. Before the object can be viewed as the greatest good, it must be compared with other objects, as both are sources or means of good. Before this act of comparing, there must be an act dictated, not by selfishness, but by self-love, in which the mind determines to direct its thoughts to the objects, for the sake of considering their relative value, of forming a judgment respecting it, and of choosing one or the other as the chief good. These acts also imply, under a presentation of the objects to the mind, an intellectual perception of their adaptedness to

the nature of man, as sources or means of happiness; and also an excitement of constitutional susceptibilities in view of the objects; *i. e.* involuntary propensities, inclinations or desires, toward each object respectively."—pp. 19, 20.

This is much as it would be in an optician to affirm that there are, and must be certain acts and states, which in the order of nature, precede that act which the term seeing is employed to denote,—that before one can see, he must open his eyes; before he can exert that act, he must resolve to open them; before he can resolve to open them, he must compare that with other acts as objects of choice; before this act, he must in like manner resolve to compare them; and before all this, he must be conscious that he has eyes, that he can see with them, that there are objects to be seen, that he is capable of making comparisons, resolutions, and exerting acts; and finally, which is the most profound of all, that "*these acts imply under a presentation of objects to the mind, an intellectual* perception of their adaptedness to the nature of man, as means of happiness!" How satisfactory it is to be at once thus easily admitted into all the mysteries of a subject.

But who now are they, who are thus regarded as needing this minute analysis and laborious proof, in order to be convinced that there are acts that precede the last act in that series, which the term regeneration, according to his statement, is usually employed to denote? Can it be that the theologians whom he represents as using it in that sense, still need to be convinced that there are such acts as they employ the term to designate? No such affirmations or proofs can be necessary for the Calvinists, who use the term, as I have shewn, to denote a change of the physical constitution, as they have never denied or doubted that

there are acts which immediately precede regeneration, but have been fully aware of their existence and importance, have treated of them in the most distinct and formal manner, under the term conviction, in distinction from regeneration and conversion, and have regarded the use of the means of regeneration as involved at least chiefly in their excitement.

In like manner, if his representation of the sense in which the term regeneration is generally used, is to be regarded as correct, who are they, for whose instruction and conviction, he thought that portion of his review necessary which is employed in so laboriously proving, that regeneration itself, consists in a mere voluntary exertion of the mind, and not in a change of its physical constitution ; as he there admits and affirms it is generally held to be. Are the great body of the clergy and churches with whom he here takes care to let us understand he is contending, so unfortunate as really to entertain these precisely opposite views on the same subject? or is he so unhappy in all his statements respecting their use of the term regeneration, as totally to misrepresent their doctrine.

III. The error into which he has thus fallen on this subject, has contributed, it would seem, to perplex his speculations respecting the use of the means of regeneration.

The perpetual discussions and inextricable difficulties, with which the church has been harassed on this topic, have had their origin entirely in the prevalent theory of depravity, and are its legitimate results. That doctrine exhibits man as naturally totally incapable of acting obediently, from a defect in his physical constitution ; and consequently represents moral means, as wholly incompetent and unadapted to lead him to obey. These two posi-

tions have accordingly been formally taught by Calvinists generally, as indubitably true, and among the most essential in their system. But it has offered itself resistlessly to the common sense, both of such as taught, and such as heard these doctrines, as a natural conclusion from them, that moral means are then of no utility whatever to the unrenewed; and that consequently they are neither under any obligation, nor rational inducement to use them. These most manifest and formidable difficulties, presenting themselves at every step, have been felt by Calvinists most distressingly to embarrass their system; and the object of their discussions on the subject has been to exhibit some method, by which to evade or surmount them, in consistency with their theory. Accordingly, assuming the truth of these two positions, they have laboured to rebut the latter inference, by demonstrating from other sources, such as the divine requirements, that men *are* under obligation to use the means of regeneration, forgetting that their theory, in denying their ability, necessarily involved a denial also of their obligation to obey that command. They have endeavoured in like manner to obviate the former, by showing, that although the means of grace are not at all instrumental to the renovation of the mind, yet they render important services, by demonstrating their own incapacity to change the heart, by showing the necessity of a supernatural agent to accomplish that effect, and by illustrating the greatness of the power which is exerted in its production; and as these difficulties exist only in respect to such as are unrenewed, their discussion has had reference only to the influence of the means of grace, antecedently to the accomplishment of regeneration. The truth of all this is, without further proof, sufficiently apparent

from the passages on the subject, which have already been quoted from Dr. Dwight and Dr. Griffin. Of the existence of formidable difficulties on this subject the reviewer is aware, and has laboured through a long series of pages to escape, or overcome them, with what success I shall now proceed to inquire. The most important of his statements are presented in the following passages.

"The question thus naturally arises, what are the acts which constitute using the means of regeneration? We answer, that by using the means of regeneration, we do not understand any acts which either precede, or are to be distinguished from regeneration itself, when this term is used in its more common popular import; but we understand those acts, which, together with another act, are in the more popular use of language, included under the term regeneration."

"Now from this more popular and comprehensive import of the term regeneration, we are obliged, by the object in view, to depart, when we speak of using the means of regeneration." "We suppose the distinction between using the means of regeneration, and regeneration itself, is a theological rather than a scriptural distinction." "Accordingly, when we speak of the means of regeneration, we shall use the word *regeneration*, in a more limited import, than its ordinary popular import, and shall confine it, chiefly for the sake of convenient phraseology, to the act of the will or heart; in distinction from other mental acts connected with it, or to *that* act of the will or heart, which consists in a preference of God to every other object."

"In thus confining the term regeneration to the act of the will or heart, when we speak of using the means of regeneration, we do not intend to decide any minute questions respecting the precise thing done by the agency of the Spirit; nor whether his interposition does or does not influence other acts beside that of the will or heart. All that our present object requires us to say on these topics is, that regeneration in the popular import of the term, is an event which depends on the interposition of the Holy Spirit;—that it *so* depends on this interposition, that whatsoever part of that process of mental

acts and states which, in the popular use of the term, constitute regeneration, is produced by this divine interposition; *some part* of the process is preliminary to such interposition, and preliminary also to that, which in the limited use of the word, may be called regeneration; and that whatever acts be regarded as thus preliminary, they are to be regarded and spoken of, either as using the means of grace, or as using the means of regeneration."

"No acts of the sinner, done while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, constitute using the means of regeneration."

"Those acts which are thus dictated by the instinctive desire of happiness, and which are prior to that act of the will or heart, called regeneration in the *restricted* sense of the term, constitute the sinner's using the means of grace."

"The question therefore arises, where do we place the using of the means of regeneration? We answer, under regeneration *itself* in the *comprehensive* sense of that term,—in those acts of contemplating divine truth, which we have spoken of as necessarily coexisting with the act of choice or love, denominated regeneration in the restricted, theological meaning of the word. Up to that moment, the selfish principle had predominated in the soul, and no acts performed under its influence, could be a using of the means of grace. But at that moment, by the influence of the divine Spirit, the selfish principle ceases to predominate in the heart. At that moment God and divine things stand before the soul, no longer preoccupied by supreme selfishness and love of the world. At that moment this view of God and divine things becomes *the means of regeneration.*" pp. 16, 18, 19, 22. 210. 694.

These statements, in place of extricating the subject from the difficulties with which it has heretofore been embarrassed, are themselves involved in extreme perplexity.

He places the use of the means of regeneration, in that perception of truth, or attention to it, with which the mind is employed cotemporaneously with the exertion of its first right act,—"under regeneration *itself* in the *comprehensive* sense of that term—in those acts of contemplating truth,

which we have spoken of as *necessarily co-existing with the act of choice or love, denominated regeneration in the restricted meaning of the word.*"

But in placing the "using of the means of regeneration" at this point, he has rendered it a matter of some difficulty, to discern the utility or design of that large portion of his essay, which he employs in laboriously endeavouring to prove, that "no acts of the sinner done while the selfish principle remains active in the heart, constitute using the means of regeneration." What additional light is thrown on the subject by the endless repetition of a few common-places, in all the forms of which they are susceptible, with which we are served throughout that interminable argument? So far as they stand related to this subject, they amount to nothing more than showing, that acts of the heart, are not acts of the understanding, that volitions are not perceptions, or rather that perceptions which co-exist with selfish choices, are not perceptions with which benevolent choices are co-temporaneously exerted. Can it have been necessary to employ so many pages of mataphysics to demonstrate this truism?

He moreover places "the using of the means of regeneration" exclusively in the perception of or attention to truth, as distinguished from the exertion toward that truth of "the act of choice or love, denominated regeneration in the restricted meaning of the word." Otherwise he would make "the using of the means of regeneration," to include "regeneration itself" "in the *restricted* meaning;" which is directly against his definition. Of what service then, I again ask, are all those pages, which are employed in showing, that no *selfish* acts constitute a using of the means of regeneration? If the use of them consists in acts of per-

ception simply, as distinguished from volitions, can it be necessary to show that volitions are not such acts? Above all, if it is stated to consist in mere perceptions that co-exist with a *right* act of choice, can it still remain necessary so laboriously to prove, that *selfish* choices are not such a perception?

He represents those perceptions of truth, which constitute "the using of the means of regeneration," as taking place antecedently to the interposition of the Holy Spirit. "Whatsoever part of that process of mental acts and states, which in the popular use of the term, constitute regeneration, is produced by this divine interposition; *some part of the process is preliminary to such interposition*, and preliminary also to that which in the limited use of the word, may be called regeneration; *and whatever acts be regarded as thus preliminary, they are to be regarded and spoken of as using the means of grace.*"

It will probably be thought a bold act, especially for one who professes not "to decide any minute questions respecting the precise thing done by the agency of the Holy Spirit," thus peremptorily to determine when he does, and does not interpose in accomplishing the work of regeneration. But this statement is obnoxious to other serious objections.

It involves a denial of his own representation, that the Spirit renews the mind through the instrumentality of truth, and implies therefore that he produces that effect by changing the physical constitution. The only mode in which regeneration can be produced through the instrumentality of truth, is manifestly that simply of bringing it before the mind, that it may exert on the voluntary powers its natural and appropriate influence. There is no ground to imagine that motives are endowed with any supernatural power, or

exert any extraordinary influence in the production of that change. Their agency takes place on precisely the same principles, as in all other instances. Such is the testimony of all experience. The peculiarity in the effect results from and corresponds to, the peculiarity of the moral influence. The renewed will undoubtedly universally testify, that the first right affections of which they were conscious, were exerted under the influence of new and peculiar views of divine things, and were only the natural and appropriate effects of such views, and such as those and similar apprehensions are accustomed to excite. The agency of the Spirit in renewing the mind through their instrumentality, must accordingly be employed in bringing this moral influence to bear on the mind;—in presenting to it that array of motives, which sways it to right feeling. To deny this, and represent the whole moral influence under which the first right affection is exerted, as acting on the mind *before* the interposition of the Spirit; is plainly to deny that *he* renews it through their instrumentality, and to exhibit his agency as exerted directly on "the very substance of the soul itself," and employed therefore in producing in it a mere physical change.

And placing, as he thus does, the "using of the means of regeneration" in the mere perception of truth, which the mind itself acquires previously to the intervention of the Holy Spirit, it is not easy to see on what ground, in consistency with this, it is, that he makes so broad a distinction as he does, between this perception, and others which precede it; nor with what propriety he attaches so much importance to his statement, even if admitted to be true, that "the selfish principle is suspended," when this perception takes place. Though he exhibits this perception as coexisting

with the first right act, yet he cannot in consistency, claim that the reason of the mind's exerting that obedient act, lies in the nature of this perception, or its influence, as that would be to represent the cause of the mind's exerting that act, as existing in, and influencing it, before the Spirit's intervention, according to his account of it. If the Holy Spirit renews the mind, and yet does not commence his work, until all the motives, which are cotemporary with the first right act, are perceived and exerting their full influence on the mind, it is incontrovertibly certain that he does not renew it through their instrumentality, but must produce the effect by a change of the physical constitution. Where then is there any propriety in assigning to this particular perception only, the title of "using the means of regeneration," any more than to many others which precede it? If using those means lies simply in the perception of truth, why does not the perception of it, when no right feelings are exerted toward it, merit that name, as much as when, from the intervention *of another cause*, such feelings are exercised? Or how can it be made to appear satisfactorily, that the mind in acquiring it, must be entirely free from selfishness?

His statements thus, if admitted, in place of disentangling the subject, only involve it in new and more perplexing difficulties. And this result is what might naturally be expected from the method which he takes to disembarrass controverted subjects. This is, to assign such meanings to the chief terms which are employed, as in his judgment will make the views which they express consistent, and then to define, affirm, and argue on the subject, precisely as though those terms had been always used with these artificial significations! Thus he employs a dozen pages or

more, to prove that the term regeneration *may* be used, both in the comprehensive and restricted sense, which he ascribes to it; and that it must be so employed, unless used to express incorrect views, and thence assumes and asserts that it is actually to be interpreted as used in that manner, and that by being taken in that sense, the subject is at once relieved from all its difficulties.

"That the word regeneration may be used sometimes in a comprehensive, and sometimes in a restricted sense, is obvious—from the nature of language. Many words in common use are complex terms, which include a number of particulars, in connection with some one leading idea." "But on the other hand, when a distinction is specifically made, when preceding acts of the mind are spoken of as means which terminate in the performance of an act of duty, it is equally clear that the word expressive of that act or duty, is no longer to be taken in its comprehensive, but in its limited and specific import. Yet a want of due attention to this fact, has been a prolific source of fierce logomachy respecting the means of regeneration. Previous to regeneration in the ordinary sense of the term, men are represented in the Scriptures as enemies to God. Every act is treated as a persistence in rebellion, and the very 'ploughing of the wicked' is declared to be 'sin.' One class of divines, therefore, struck with the absurdity of considering sinful actions as the means of holiness, have totally denied that any act of the sinner, previous to a change of heart, is a using of the means of regeneration. Another class, arguing correctly from the nature of the human mind, and the express declarations of the Scriptures, that such means do exist, and must be used previous to a change of heart, have fallen into the error of maintaining, that *sinful* acts and doings constitute a using of these means."—"Now the obvious distinction to which we have alluded, between the comprehensive and the restricted import of the term in question, resolves the whole difficulty. A using of the means of regeneration there certainly must be, if by regeneration is meant the final act of giving the heart to God. But if the term regeneration is taken in its popular import, then those preceding acts under

the influence of the selfish principle on which convicted sinners are so much accustomed to rely, are not a using of the means of regeneration, nor have they any tendency toward such a result. Take the word regeneration in its limited and specific import in the one case, and in its ordinary and comprehensive one in the other, and the controversy is ended." pp. 211, 212, 213.

He here assumes—the reader will perceive—that the *same* term will of course be used to express both these effects —the first act of love, and those acts which precede it,— and intimates that it actually is so used by divines in their discussions on the subject, and that it is owing wholly to "want of due attention" to the difference of meaning with which it is employed in the two cases, that their statements and reasonings respecting it, have been involved in so much perplexity. He, however, produces no example of its having been used in accordance with his definition, and the whole assumption, as I have already shown, and as his own complaint indeed of inattention to the different meanings which he ascribes to it implies, is wholly unauthorised. The mode accordingly, in which he ends "the controversy," is simply that of assigning to the term, two significations entirely unknown to former controversialists, and incompatible with their theoretical views, in such a manner as totally to transfer the controversy from the point in debate, to one where no difficulty whatever is felt, and then assuming that those are its real and proper significations, and actually expressive of the views which are entertained on the subject! a summary process truly to dry up this "prolific source of fierce logomachy."

How this expedient is to "resolve the difficulties" of those who do not happen to entertain *the theory* which *he* employs the term to express, who regard regeneration, not

as an act, or series of acts, but as a change of the physical constitution, it is not easy to discern. Calvinists have not employed the term regeneration to denote the first right act. They have regarded that as *the consequence* of regeneration, and distinguished it as such by the term conversion. Their controversy respecting the use of the means of grace has had no reference whatever to that act, but respected the agency or period solely which *precedes* regeneration. Not a solitary being can be found, I venture to believe, who ever denied or doubted that the means of grace are used by the mind, and used aright, at its conversion, or the exertion of its first obedient act.

The method therefore in which he resolves "the whole difficulty," is that of quitting the point where difficulties exist, and carrying the question forward to one in respect to which neither any perplexity is felt, nor any difference of opinion entertained!

All the perplexities and contentions of the Calvinists on the subject, are thus converted into a mere farce. Their discussions have truly been "a fierce logomachy," according to this account of them. They have involved themselves in doubts, contradictions, and endless embarrassments on the subject, from mere "want of attention" to the fact, that they had in truth no difficulty nor disagreement whatever in regard to it. It makes the question agitated for so long a period, and with so much perplexity—whether the unrenewed ever use the means of grace aright,—equally vain and unmeaning; as if by using them is meant the perception of truth *cotemporaneously with loving and obeying it*, no room whatever is left for the inquiry whether they use them who do not exert those obedient acts.

All these difficulties, both with which the reviewer has

thus entangled himself, and with which the Calvinistic theory is embarrassed, are undoubtedly, however, wholly artificial, and the result of erroneous apprehensions. The subject has not in itself any more inherent perplexity than any other. It may, indeed, I think, with propriety, be regarded as one of the most simple and easily comprehensible in the whole circle of theology.

The means of grace, it is held on all hands, are the truths of religion revealed to us in the Scriptures, and made accessible to our knowledge by the external universe and the dispensations of Providence. They are means of grace, as they are inducements to holiness,—instruments, or fitted to be instruments, of exciting us to obey the gospel. To use them accordingly, consists in bringing them before the mind, and regarding them with attention, that they may enjoy an opportunity of exerting their appropriate influence on the voluntary powers.—This is undoubtedly the meaning with which the phrase is used by Calvinists.—Now to such as regard man as a moral agent, the efficient cause of his voluntary acts, capable of acting only in view of motives and by choice, and as not obstructed by any physical depravity, nor "selfish principle," which is only the same thing under a new name, but completely capable of yielding obedience, and therefore under obligation to obey the gospel; what room is there for perplexity here, any more than on any other point involving our agency and obligations? To ask whether men *can* bring this moral influence to act on their minds, is only in other words asking whether their moral powers are such, that they are capable of perceiving the truths of natural and revealed religion; a fact which the persons supposed, have already admitted. To ask whether they *do* ever place themselves under this influence,

is in like manner simply to ask, whether they ever have any perceptions of divine things. To inquire whether they *ought* to open their minds to its access, is asking whether they ought to love and obey God; and is only inquiring in another form, whether they are *capable* of it, which is again asking after what is already admitted; and is as preposterous, as it is to ask whether they are under any other obligation. There is no more ground for raising this question here, it seems to me, or propriety in it, than there is in asking whether men generally ought to allow the truths which relate to the persons, the lives, the rights, and the property of their fellow-men, to have access to their minds, and to exert their proper influence over their conduct. In like manner, the question whether men use these means of grace *aright*, is wholly without propriety, unless the object be to learn whether they use them to that *degree* to which they ought;—a question which may indeed be asked with good reason, but with as much propriety however in regard to those who have been renewed, as to those who have not. It being admitted at the outset, that men are capable of performing all these various acts, that thence, and from the divine requirement and its connexion with their happiness, they are under obligation to perform them, and that they neither will nor can pursue any other course, except as they choose it, there is no room whatever left to raise the inquiry whether they can or ought to exert them.—It is merely running in a circle. And if by the question whether the impenitent ever use them aright, is only meant whether they have used them to the extent to which they ought, it has no more appropriateness to them, than to those who are regenerated.

To these statements, Calvinists themselves would un-

doubtedly assent, were they to admit the great fact, on which they all rest, that men possess the requisite capacity for these acts. But that fact they do not admit, and thence it is that all their difficulties arise.—They regard the mind as infected with a physical depravity, which absolutely disqualifies it for right actions, and renders it literally impossible that the truths of the gospel should excite, or have any tendency to excite it to obedience. From its want, according to this scheme, of a right disposition, and subjection to the control of a wrong one, the only effect which motives can possibly produce is, to excite to transgression, and consequently the greater the extent is to which their influence is carried, the greater and more intense will be the depravity which they will excite. The difficulties, therefore, with which Calvinists are perplexed on the subject, are the necessary results of their theory, and can never be obviated while that theory continues to be maintained. On the ground of that theory, the question is asked with entire propriety, and resistless force, how the means of grace can be of any use to the unrenewed, and how the impenitent can be under obligation to place themselves under their influence, when it can only prove an intense and resistless temptation? The only method, therefore, of "resolving these difficulties," is to give up that theory.—Merely to add—as the reviewer has done to end the controversy—a new signification to the terms which are employed to express it, and then apply them to new subjects, may indeed add something to its confusion, but will not obviate any difficulties while the errors from which they spring continue to be held.

IV. The reviewer has fallen into another essential error, in his representation that the feelings with which the mind

directs its attention to truth, determines the moral character of the affections, which it exercises under the influence of that truth;—that if the choice, by which it brings truth before its eye, is unholy, all the choices to which the influence of that truth excites it, will infallibly be of the same character.

This assumption lies at the foundation of a great portion of his reasonings, and is incessantly reiterated throughout his discussion. A single passage will sufficiently exhibit the mode in which he presents it, and the important station which it occupies in his system.

"The acts of the sinner which we are now considering, have, while continued, an infallible tendency to prevent his regeneration. The tendency of the selfish principle being to subserve and gratify itself in all specific action, amounts to a tendency to protect and perpetuate its own existence; accordingly we shall see that the transition of the mind from the supreme love of the world to the supreme love of God, without the suspension of the entire influence of the former, and of all acts dictated by it, is in the most absolute sense impossible. Before the supreme affections of the heart can be transferred from one object to another, the latter must be made the subject of consideration, and also of comparison with the former, as the means of good; and this must be done with the design of choosing anew, one or the other as the supreme good. But as long as the selfish principle continues active in the mind, the only possible voluntary acts are those which are designed and fitted to subserve and gratify this principle. To this end, all the thoughts, so far as they are voluntarily employed, are exclusively directed. The purpose being taken, the grand question in regard to the desirableness of its object is decided, and the decision supersedes all farther inquiry or consideration in respect to the comparative worth of any other object. Of course the acts of consideration and comparison requisite to a new choice, are in the present state of the heart or affections, effec-

tually excluded from the mind." "The same fatal tendency may be traced in all the specific acts of the sinner which are dictated by the selfish principle." "True it is, the sinner may employ his thoughts on divine truth; he may read the Word of God—he may hear the Gospel preached—he may even speculate on its doctrines as a professed and zealous advocate. But never are these things done while under the active influence of the selfish principle, without proposing some selfish end. For what other end can he act while under the influence of the selfish principle? But are not acts which respect divine truth done from such a principle, and for such a purpose, as truly adapted to prevent the sanctifying influence of truth, as any other acts? Is not this a palpable perversion of truth—a gross abuse of it, which must, while persevered in, defeat the end for which it is revealed? Nor is this the only light in which the subject ought to be viewed. Never does the sinner under the influence of the selfish principle, direct his thoughts in such a manner to divine truth, that it can reach and break down that principle. Never does he direct his thoughts, or even suffer them to be directed to truth, without devising and adopting some expedient for the very purpose of resisting and preventing its proper influence on the mind; never without voluntarily forming either by perversions or false connections, or direct denials, such views of truth, of his relations to it, and its relations to him, as tend to protect his supreme affection for wordly good; never without freely, deliberately, and with fixed purpose of heart, resolving not to come under the full practical power of the truth. How can it be otherwise?"—so entirely does this principle, while active in the mind, control and direct all the thoughts, and modify and check all the constitutional emotions and feelings in subserviency to itself; so entirely does it employ them on the things of earth and time; so absolutely does it enlist the whole man to secure its own gratification, protection, and perpetuity, that it shuts every avenue of the mind against the sanctifying approach of truth. No dungeon was ever more firmly barred, or more deeply dark, than all the inner chambers of the soul, when under the active tyranny of this principle. How profoundly conscience sleeps! How is every sensibility to the excellence and worth of divine realities hushed! How relentless too in its dominion, and how desperate and triumphant in its resist-

ance of truth, and of the God of truth. Were there no other access to the inner man, except through this principle of the heart: were there nothing to which the motives of the Gospel could be addressed, but the hardihood of this fell spirit—no way to overcome this "strong man," except by direct assault, then for aught we can see, the moral transformation of the soul were hopeless even to Omnipotence."—p. 24—39.

According to these passages then, the choices which the mind exercises under the influence of truth, are always of precisely the same moral character as those by which it fixes its attention on that truth. If it is unholy in its choice to read, hear, or contemplate the divine word, it will infallibly exhibit the same character in all the affections which it exercises under its influence. That this is totally at variance with fact, however, it can scarcely be necessary to prove.

It is nothing more nor less than the Arminian doctrine, under a new name, of the self-determining power of the will; as it represents that the choices which are exerted under the influence of truth, are not determined by that truth, but by the *previous* choices of the mind. It of course involves a denial that the mind is determined in its volitions by the influence of motives; and renders them as inefficient and useless as they are represented to be in the scheme which exhibits God as the efficient cause of our voluntary acts.

It is totally at variance with all experience. So far is it from being the fact, that we either do or can determine the moral nature of our future volitions by our present ones, or that our next choices will infallibly be of the same character as those which we now exert, that no human being can even in a solitary instance foresee, or predict with cer-

tainty what the nature of his next volition will be; and for this plain reason, that the affections and choices which we exert, depend wholly on the motives which influence us. But we can never foresee for an instant what our next perceptions are to be. We cannot even discern with certainty to what subject they will relate, much less what their precise modification will be, their connection with our present thoughts, their extent and their intensity. Such is preeminently the fact in moments of high excitement, when the perceptions are rapid, intense, and from the quickened power of association, transferred from object to object, apparently little connected with each other, with the rapidity of light. Let any one make the trial, and he will find that the future is an abyss of darkness, into which his keenest glances are utterly unable to penetrate. Every hour's experience thus shows this representation to be wholly erroneous.

Our present choices may undoubtedly influence our next and future volitions, and in two ways; as they are instrumental in determining our perceptions, and as they are themselves recollected. In the latter case, they become motives, and exert their influence in precisely the same manner as others. In the former, their agency is employed in simply introducing motives to our minds. But they are not in either case the only cause which acts on us, but are only one among multitudes; and the volitions which are exercised in consequence of their agency, are not necessarily or uniformly of the same moral character with them, but depend on the nature of the motives which influence the mind, by whatever instrumentality they are placed before it, and are virtuous or sinful as their predominating influence excites to the one or the other.

Another insuperable objection to the reviewer's representation is, that it exhibits it as utterly impossible, that the character of our volitions should ever be changed through the instrumentality of moral means. If our present choice determines what the nature of the next shall be, and this in like manner determines the nature of that by which it is followed, and thus each certainly and necessarily transmits its own character to its successor, there is of course no hope nor possibility that motives should ever prove the instrument of introducing a change in their character. The important office of determining the moral nature of our choices does not pertain to them at all, but belongs solely to the first volition in the series; much in the same manner as the constitution of each generation in a race of animals, depends on that of their first progenitors. The only mode in which the agency can be changed is through a change of the physical constitution. It is, of course, equally impossible, on this scheme, as I shall have occasion to show more fully hereafter, that the selfish principle, which occupies so important a station in the reviewer's system, should ever be "suspended," except through a similar instrumentality.

This scheme of volitions sustaining towards each other this relation of cause and effect, and transmitting from one to the other the same unchanging moral likeness, though somewhat different, is equally erroneous and absurd, as the theory of permanent volitions, which in the Inquiry, he ascribed to Dr. Dwight, and sanctioned by his approval.

V. Another essential error which runs through the whole web of his speculations, and is the last to which I shall advert, is that his statements and reasonings, occupying so

large a portion of his pages, respecting "the selfish principle," imply that it is a constitutional attribute of the mind, and are perplexed accordingly with all the difficulties, and obnoxious to all the objections, which embarrass the doctrine of physical depravity. This feature of his theory exhibits itself in a variety of aspects.

Thus "the selfish principle," according to his account of it, is not a mere characteristic of volitions which are exerted successively, but exists permanently in the mind, and imparts its character to those volitions.

"The tendency of the selfish principle being to subserve and gratify itself in all specific action, amounts to a tendency to protect and perpetuate its own existence. Accordingly, we shall see that the transition of the mind from the supreme love of the world, to the supreme love of God, without *the suspension of the entire influence of the former, and of all acts dictated by it, is in the most absolute sense impossible.*" "*But so long as the selfish principle continues active in the mind, the only possible voluntary acts, are those which are designed and fitted to subserve this principle.*" "A transition, therefore, from the supreme love of the world, to the supreme love of God, without intervening mental acts, which involve *the suspension of the former, and of all acts dictated by it, is impossible.*" p. 34, 35.

The "selfish principle" is thus exhibited, like the sinful disposition in the Calvinistic theory, as a "cause whence volitions flow;" as dictating them, communicating to them their character, making them the instruments of its gratification, and exerting over them so predominating and resistless an influence, as to render it absolutely impossible that any other than the selfish volitions to which it gives birth should be exerted, while it continues to exist in the mind. But if it is thus the cause of these volitions, it must

of course exist antecedently to their being exerted, and when therefore nothing but its physical nature is predicable of the mind. And as it is the same principle, not a series of principles, which is thus represented as producing these effects, it must of course exist permanently in the mind, and constitute one of its physical attributes.

We are carried to the same conclusion by the broad dissimilarity which his account of them represents as existing, between this "selfish principle," and "self love." He does not regard "this selfish principle" as a mere modification of the desire of happiness, or mode in which that desire exerts itself, but exhibits it as a totally distinct, dissimilar, and even hostile principle.

The desire of happiness is undoubtedly the original of all the desires, or rather is the sole desire which the mind exercises. The others, which the common philosophy exhibits as different species, are only modifications of this, —the modes in which it exerts itself,—and receive their designation from those modes, or the objects in which it seeks its gratification. It is the primary impulse in every voluntary action, and the ground of the fact that the choices of the mind are always as the greatest apparent good; and the various names by which it is distinguished, are derived from the varying modes or objects in which it seeks the enjoyment of that good. It is benevolent, when it exerts itself consistently with the rights and favourably to the happiness of others; and selfish when it seeks its object at the expense of their well-being. It is avarice when it selects wealth as the chief source of gratification; ambition when it seeks it in power, and the love of fame when it fixes on the admiration of men for that purpose. It of course therefore cannot with any propriety be in any of these instances

denominated *a principle* of the mind, if the term is employed to denote an original attribute, in distinction from a mode of action. It is not itself such a principle, but a mere operation of the mind, and the result solely of the agency of motives on it,—so absolutely that were the mind never to gain perceptions of objects from which happiness is obtained, this desire could never be exerted.

The reverse however of all this are the nature and office of this selfish principle, as it is exhibited by the reviewer. It is not an operation of the mind, as he represents it, but a principle that acts ; not a mere modification of the desire of happiness, but a principle unlike and incompatible indeed, it would seem with that, and needs to be "suspended" from its agency, in order that that may rise to a controlling influence over the mind.

" Is it then said, that the sinner may certainly be induced to look at the necessity of renouncing the world, to escape future punishment, and that he may thus be led soberly to consider his ways, and to ponder the wisdom of his present choice, and to bethink himself whether he will not resort to the only source of true happiness? This we readily admit. But the question is, what can prompt to such acts of consideration? Not surely the selfish principle. This never prompted a sinner to such meditations for such a purpose. The selfish principle never put a sinner upon a course of sober contemplation, to frustrate his main object. When was it known that one's governing purpose, employed the mind in devising ways and means of defeating itself? The acts of consideration now supposed, therefore, *instead of being dictated by the selfish principle, are to be traced to a very different origin. The truths presented to the mind have touched some other sensibility of the man.* Instead of being induced to ponder thus soberly, the things of eternity, in order to subserve the selfish principle, *this principle, for the time being, has lost its controlling power*, and his sober contemplations are prompted *by that first and essential principle of our nature, the desire of happiness.* The man is not thinking and acting to ac-

complish any selfish worldly purpose whatsoever; but as a being capable of happiness, and desiring it, is considering whether he will not, for the purpose of obtaining the highest degree of it, renounce every inferior object of affection for the supreme good. The case therefore now stated, shows that the only supposable acts of a sinner, with which his regeneration can be connected, *involve the suspended influence of the selfish principle, and how impossible it is, that without such a suspension, the heart should be changed.* So entirely does this principle, while active in the mind, *control and direct the thoughts, and modify and check all the constitutional emotions and feelings in subserviency to itself;* so entirely does it employ them on the things of earth and time; *so absolutely does it enlist the whole man* to secure its own gratification, protection, and perpetuity, that it shuts every avenue of the mind against the sanctifying approach of truth."—p. 38, 39.

So far is it, therefore, according to this representation, from being a mere mode in which the desire of happiness exerts itself, that it is essentially incompatible with and hostile to that desire. Instead of being one of its modifications, it checks, modifies and controls that and all other "constitutional emotions and feelings, in subserviency to itself." But if it thus controls this desire, it plainly precedes it in existence, and must therefore belong to the mind before even those perceptions take place, which are the instruments of exciting that desire, and antecedently therefore to the *first* operation of the mind, and when nothing belongs to it, except its physical nature. If it controls and directs all the thoughts, and modifies and checks all the constitutional emotions and feelings, in subserviency to itself, it manifestly is not itself one of those thoughts or feelings, and not therefore an operation of the mind, but precedes them all, and exists when nothing can be ascribed to the mind, but its constitutional attributes.

This "principle is not governed in its operations," ac-

cording to his account of it, by the influence of motives, but on the contrary, determines and controls the influence which they exert. If it "entirely controls and directs the thoughts," which undoubtedly constitute, at least, a large portion of the motives that influence the mind; such, of course, is the fact, so far forth as they are concerned; and such must it be, likewise, in respect to all, if it "entirely modifies and checks all the constitutional emotions and feelings in subserviency to itself," which are admitted on all hands, to be governed in their operations by the influence of motives, and which cannot therefore be thus entirely controlled by a power lying back of them, except as it exerts its agency through their instrumentality, and modifies *them* also, as well as all "the constitutional emotions and feelings," which are exerted under their influence,—"in subserviency to itself."

Accordingly he says, that "so entirely does this principle —control and direct the thoughts, and modify and check all the constitutional emotions and feelings in subserviency to itself—*that it shuts every avenue of the mind against the sanctifying approach of truth. No dungeon was ever more firmly barred, or more deeply dark, than all the inner chambers of the soul, when under the active tyranny of this principle.*—Were there no other access to the inner man except through this principle of the heart; were there nothing to which the motives of the gospel could be addressed, but the hardihood of this fell spirit, no way to overcome this 'strong man,' except by direct assault, then for aught we can see, the *moral* transformation of the soul were hopeless even to Omnipotence."

It follows therefore irresistibly, that the only way in which this "strong man" can be overcome, is by changing

the physical constitution of the mind. If as he thus represents, it has all the moral influence that ever reaches the mind, entirely under its control, and "modifies and checks it in subserviency to itself," if "never does the sinner, under the influence of the selfish principle, direct his thoughts in *such a manner* to divine truth, that it *can reach and break down that principle;*" if "never does he direct his thoughts, *or even suffer them to be directed to truth*, without devising and adopting some expedient for the very purpose of resisting and preventing its proper influence; never without voluntarily forming, either by perversions, or false connexions, or direct denials, *such views* of truth, of his relations to it, and its relations to him, as tend to protect his supreme affection for worldly good; never, without freely, deliberately, and with fixed purpose of heart, resolving not to come under the full practical power of the truth;" and finally if, as he elsewhere teaches, the feelings with which the mind turns its attention to the truth, infallibly determine the nature of the affections which it exerts under its influence,—each preceding volition transmitting its exact moral character to its successor,—then it is clear, beyond controversy, that "the hardihood of this fell spirit" can never be overcome through the instrumentality of a moral influence; and if overcome at all, therefore, must be subdued by a mere physical agency, employed in changing the physical constitution.

Thus in whatever relation we contemplate his exhibition of this selfish principle, it wears the aspect of the theory of physical depravity, and is nothing else than that doctrine under a new name, without any amendment of its errors, or diminution of its perplexities.

Many other representations and arguments occur in the

progress of the review, that are obnoxious to similar animadversion, but I content myself with this notice of the main pillars of its system, with the subversion of which the whole fabric necessarily falls to the ground.

I have been led to this exhibition of the "principles" which the chief statements and reasonings of the reviewer involve, partly for the purpose of correcting the erroneous impression, which seems to have gained some currency, that his doctrines on this subject accord essentially with those which are held by myself, and that consequently the views which I have heretofore presented to the public, are obnoxious to the objections which so obviously embarrass those which he has thought proper to advocate. To such as shall peruse these pages, or those that have preceded them on the subject, it will become apparent that little reason has existed for the indulgence of that impression. The system which it has been the object of this work to exhibit, will not be found to be encumbered by the "stubble" of a "sinful disposition," a "selfish principle," an "immanent" and perpetual "volition," nor any other modification of physical depravity, but to be simple,—it is believed—consistent, adjusted to the attributes of our nature, and the principles of the divine government, and to be commended therefore to the understanding and the heart, alike by the sanction of revelation, and the corroborating testimony of consciousness.

So far is the reviewer however from having consistently adopted it, or advanced—as it would seem—after so many years of inquiry and discussion, even to a comprehension of its nature, that he has yet to go through the preliminary process of deliverance from the theory of physical depravity, in the bewildering mazes of which he still continues

to wander. In place of extricating himself from that scheme, he has been endeavouring to incorporate with its uncongenial elements, such portions of the opposite system as he has happened to embrace, and has finally completed their confusion, by intermingling with the mass, the still more repugnant ingredients of his doctrine of immanent choices, and volitions transmitting their moral character from one to the other.

Those who are acquainted with the history of these discussions respecting the nature of man and his agency, so far as I have been concerned in them, are aware that the views which I have exhibited, were not only adopted and made public without any intercourse whatever with him, but had long been held, and some of the most essential of them sent forth from the press, before his attention began to be attracted to the subject.

For whatever views, therefore, I have advanced, I alone am responsible, and am responsible for those only. For the obnoxious theories which the reviewer has attempted to incorporate with them, or with other doctrines, whatever defence or explanation may be thought to be required, must in like manner, be sought from him.

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CONTENTS.

ART. I.—The Biblical Repertory's Review on the Calvinistic Doctrine of Depravity . . 217

ART. II.—Considerations on the methods of conducting Benevolent Undertakings . . . 270

ART. III.—Rev. E. R. Tyler's Sermon on the Preferableness of Holiness to Sin . . . 305

THE Views in Theology will continue to be published semi-annually, in May and November, and be devoted chiefly, as heretofore, to discussion on the Doctrines of Religion. Four numbers will form a volume. Those who desire the work will please to give notice to the publisher, at 142 Nassau-street. Ministers and theological students of whatever denomination, will receive it, if desired, without charge.

THE BIBLICAL REPERTORY'S REVIEW

ON THE

CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF DEPRAVITY.

THE author of the Review in the Biblical Repertory for April last, of Dr. Cox's Sermon on Regeneration, introduces the discussion to which its numerous pages are devoted, by deprecating controversies generally on subjects of religion;—especially such, it would seem from his intimations, as those respecting moral agency, which have now for several years, to some extent, attracted public attention,—as the offspring of ill-judged zeal, fruitful of obstructions to the piety and peace of the church, and from the passions which they are thought to exhibit and to be adapted to excite, unbecoming the christian name. To the utterance of this censure, however, he was obviously prompted by the conviction that the views of those whom he reprehends are essentially incorrect, and their controversies consequently *in effect*, mere efforts to subvert the truth and give currency to error; and the justice of his reproach is accordingly entirely dependent on the propriety of that assumption.

If the system of doctrines which he entertains, is as demonstratively the system of the gospel as he imagines it to be, and is thence causelessly called in question by those whom he assails, they undoubtedly merit, for intruding their discussion on the peace of the church, not only his animadversion, but still severer rebukes from those who have unhappily been betrayed by their instrumentality into the adoption of their sentiments.

This, however, it should have occurred to this writer, is the very point in debate, the assumption of which, apart from all discussion, can with no more propriety be made by him, than might a similar assumption by those to whom he stands opposed, in favour of the sentiments which they entertain. He is undoubtedly sufficiently confident of the truth of the doctrines which he has undertaken to defend, and will be happy by his statement and commendation of them, to persuade others of their truth. But those on whom he has thought proper to cast his censure for venturing to teach their differing sentiments, are not less firmly assured of the truth of their doctrines, and equally regard themselves as under obligation, and claim an equal right to inculcate and maintain them.

That he cannot have meant to denounce all theological controversy without exception, whatever may be its object or character, is obvious from his having immediately stepped forth and taken so strenuous a part in this discussion; and to have advanced such a sentiment, were even worse than to have taught the doctrine of physical depravity. It would be to exhibit the circumstance, that others had given publicity to sentiments peculiar to themselves, no matter to what subject they might relate, nor how erroneous or hurtful they might be, as not merely presenting to all others a

sufficient reason for suppressing their own views, but as devolving on them an imperious obligation, in order to avoid the guilt of controversy, at once to stifle the voice of truth, and yield to error undisputed and unobstructed sway;—a doctrine that would find as little countenance in the example of those whom it is the reviewer's object to vindicate, as in his own. Calvinists and protestants of every name, have ever claimed it as their inalienable right to judge for themselves of the truths of religion, and regarded it as an essential privilege and imperious duty, to teach and defend, no matter by what errors or errorists they were opposed, what they believe to be doctrines of the gospel; and what they thus justly claim for themselves, they must of course as willingly allow to others.

This right of private judgment being thus common and inalienable, the true course undoubtedly is, for each, with Christian candour, independence, and decision, to teach and defend whatever he conscientiously regards as the doctrines of the gospel, and to oppose and endeavour to overthrow all sentiments whatever, taught under their name, which are in his judgment erroneous. To reject this rule on the ground that controversy is necessarily incompatible with christian character, were an indignity to religion. It would be to represent it as incapable of upright, rational, and conscientious vindication, and to exhibit its friends as at liberty to leave it without an effort for its defence, to be overborne and supplanted by error. To reject it on the ground that discussion can only be productive of evil, were equally reproachful to the gospel, as it would be to represent its defence as a task as difficult to achieve, as that of the errors to which it stands opposed; and that even less mischief would result from the undisturbed prevalence of

false doctrines, than from the struggle consequent on an effort to overthrow them, and give supremacy to truth.

Such being the obvious rights and obligations of all, the proper method of determining the truth is manifestly, not that of mere assumption on the one hand, nor denunciation on the other, but of dispassionate discussion, in which truth is the sole object sought, and evidence the medium of discovering it. Those, therefore, whom the reviewer assails, will undoubtedly continue to regard it as within the sphere of their duty, to pursue their inquiries on these topics, and give publicity to their views, and to tax those with whom they disagree, with the task of defending their opposing sentiments, until they shall either succeed in gaining a general prevalence for the doctrines which they hold, or such superior evidence shall be brought to sustain the system from which they dissent, as shall convince them and the public, that they are in error in respect to its character.

Under the impulse, accordingly, of these sentiments, I shall myself, without feeling that I am trespassing on the interests of the church, or owe any apology for it to the public, take leave to point out such difficulties as seem to me to perplex some of the more important of his representations, and to ask of him some additional confirmation of his doctrines, before I yield to them the implicit assent which he so zealously solicits; a task on which I enter the more cheerfully, that the mature consideration of the subject and logical skill which his discussion exhibits, and the ingenuous and conciliatory spirit by which it is characterised, are assurances, that the truth and force of whatever objections are justly offered to his views, will be adequately seen, and candidly appreciated.

The object of his discussion is, on the one hand, by quotations from their works, explanations of their views, and a

statement of his own theory on the subject, to acquit the older Calvinists and their modern disciples of the charge of having taught, expressly or by implication, the doctrines of physical depravity and regeneration; and on the other, to retort and fasten the charge of essential error on the differing sentiments of those who have imputed to them those doctrines. Many of his animadversions on this latter topic, have their chief reference obviously to the perplexed and vacillating representations on the subject, neither meriting nor admitting vindication, which had made their appearance in the Christian Spectator, and which are regarded with as little approbation by at least most of those to whom this writer stands opposed, as by himself. The inquiries on which I am about to enter, are not to be conducted with any reference whatever to them, but will have it for their sole object to ascertain the accuracy or error of the reviewer's statements respecting the Calvinistic doctrine of depravity.

The occasion and object of his discussion, are seen from the following paragraphs.

"To ascribe to men opinions, which, according to our notions, may be inferred from the principles which they avow—is an impropriety of very frequent occurrence, and of which we think we have great reason to complain in the sermon before us."

"While we give Dr. Cox full credit for sincerity, and acquit him of entertaining any bad feelings toward his brethren, we still think that he is chargeable with grossly misrepresenting their opinions, and holding them up to a contempt and reprobation, due only to his acknowledged caricatures."

"We have no doubt, that most of what is here stated, was intended as an exhibition of the doctrines of the old Calvinists. Our reason for thinking so is, that we are accustomed to see such, and even still more gross misrepresentations of these doctrines, though we acknowledge not often from such men as Dr. Cox. It is, however, notorious,

that this class of theologians are constantly represented as maintaining that 'man has no ability, even if he had an inclination, to believe the gospel, and be saved'—that man's depravity 'is a physical defect' that regeneration is 'a physical change,' &c. Representations have been made of these doctrines, which we had supposed no man, who felt the obligation 'of interpreting language in conformity with the known and declared nature of the thing described,' could ever allow himself to make. Belonging as we do to the class, which for the sake of convenience and distinction we have called old Calvinists, we feel ourselves aggrieved by such representations, and called upon to show, that no such doctrines can be fairly imputed to the elder Calvinists. It will not be expected, that in a single article we should go over the formidable list presented by Dr. Cox. We shall for the present, at least, confine ourselves to the doctrine of this sermon, and show that the old standard Calvinistic authors expressly disclaim the opinions here imputed to them, and that they are not fairly deducible from any of the principles which they avow. Should we entirely fail as to the second point, it would still be very unjust to charge men with holding doctrines which they constantly disclaim, because we consider them as flowing from their principles.

"The two main points of Dr. Cox's sermon are, first, that regeneration is a moral, in distinction from a physical change; and secondly, that it occurs in a manner perfectly accordant with the active powers of the soul. We use the word physical, not as synonymous with natural, but in the sense in which it is used in this sermon, implying something referring to the substance or essence. By physical regeneration, in this sense, is intended a change in the essence or essential properties of the soul, or in the language of Dr. Cox, an influence by which 'the connatural diseases in the texture of the soul are healed.' Our object is to show that Dr. Cox has misrepresented the views of his brethren on this subject; that they hold to no change in the substance of the soul, nor in any of its essential properties, but uniformly teach that the change is a moral one, and takes place in a manner perfectly congruous to the nature of a rational and active being. We appeal to the language and doctrines of all the old Calvinistic divines, in support of this assertion." P. 252—255.

These grave asseverations are not offered as the offspring

of mere conjecture nor hasty and partial inquiry, but as the result of cautious and thorough investigation, which a host of proofs concur in sustaining, and nothing is found to contravene. Is such then the fact, or is it the lot of the reviewer, in place of those whom he arraigns, to have fallen into a total misapprehension of the subject?

To determine this inquiry, I shall offer some observations on some of the mental operations, which may be regarded as deriving their distinctive character from the physical nature of the mind, and contrast with them the doctrines of the Calvinists and the statements and reasonings of the reviewer on the subject.

All our knowledge of the mind is derived from its operations. It is from them that we learn its existence, and form all our views of its nature. Some of its operations reveal to us one class of its attributes, and some another. In one variety its active powers are chiefly seen; in others its involuntary susceptibilities; and our conclusions in regard to the one or the other, are modified as these operations are seen to derive more or less of their peculiarities from the nature of the mind itself, or from the agency of the external causes which are the occasions of its giving birth to these effects.

What then must belong to a perception, emotion, or other mental act, in order that it may properly be regarded as receiving its peculiarity of character from the physical nature of the mind itself, and as thence forming a fit ground for ascribing or denying to that nature, a peculiar susceptibility or capacity, as the cause of that effect?

To this class all those undoubtedly belong, to which it gives birth from the necessity of its nature, such as perceptions and emotions that take place involuntarily. Effects

which are excited in it in that manner, under the impulse of external objects, are necessarily referred to its physical constitution as their cause, and furnish legitimate ground for inference respecting its nature and capacities.

Of these classes of effects, the first in order is that of the perceptions, which take place necessarily from the influence of external objects on the corporeal organs, or come into existence involuntarily, in association with sensations or other perceptions, such as the connection of cause and effect, the proportions of numbers, and the relations of differing truths and propositions to one another. All these perceptions and judgments in respect to them, are clearly wholly unavoidable by the mind, under the influence which acts on it, and are the necessary result of its physical nature.

Another class of its involuntary effects, is that of the emotions, or instinctive feelings of pleasure and pain, which necessarily spring up in it under the influence of its perceptions, in the same manner as its perceptions are themselves produced unavoidably by the agency of external objects; and which, like those perceptions, are obviously mere physical effects, having the whole foundation of their existence and nature, in the nature of the mind itself. They form therefore a just ground of inference respecting that nature, and oblige us to ascribe to it peculiar powers and susceptibilities, as the causes of these effects. It cannot be supposed to give birth to effects without a capacity for being their subject and cause, nor that these differing species of effects could take place in it, under the corresponding varieties of influence that act on it, were not its physical nature what it is; nor therefore that other kinds of effects could be produced in it by these same influences, unless

such a change were previously wrought in its own nature, as to vary its powers and susceptibilities. Were identically the same perception which has hitherto instinctively excited pleasurable emotions, henceforth to awaken those which are painful; were danger to inspire tranquillity, and safety to overwhelm with fear; were virtue to inflict the horrors of remorse and guilt to beget a consciousness of rectitude and self-approbation; we should be forced to the conclusion that this change in the effect was the result of a change in the nature of the mind itself, and should ascribe to it attributes accordingly, the reverse of those which it had previously possessed.

Beyond its susceptibility of being thus instinctively affected by the perceptions that take place in it, the mind has the further capacity of voluntarily exerting itself under their excitement;—of placing or continuing itself under their influence, that by their continuance or repetition, the involuntary emotions which they excite, may be repeated or prolonged; and this capacity likewise has its foundation in its physical nature.

None of its perceptions ever become motives to voluntary action, except such as instinctively awaken pleasure or pain. The choices being always as the greatest apparent good, can of course be prompted only on the one hand by perceptions which afford that happiness, and on the other by such as are unfavourable to its attainment. A great portion of the perceptions indeed that influence the mind, awaken the pleasurable feelings to which they give birth, chiefly by their known or imagined subserviency to the attainment of others, which are adapted to produce that effect more permanently, and in a greater degree. There are innumerable steps for example, in the acquisition of knowledge.

wealth, friends, power, and other means of gratification, which, contemplated apart from the effects to which they are expected to give birth at some future period, are not grateful, and even involve a relinquishment of other modes of present enjoyment. They are pleasurable however from their known or expected subservience to future gratification, and possess on that ground their superior influence over those whose power of exciting pleasure has no connexion with subsequent events.

The object of the mind in its choices is, to determine the species or train of perceptions that shall take place in it, and through that medium the species of pleasurable emotions which it shall enjoy; and their effect accordingly is, the mere reproduction of emotions of the same kind as those of which it had previously been the subject. It does not create by its volition any new and original species of enjoyment, which has not its foundation in its physical nature, and which the perceptions under which they are put forth, had not instinctively excited. As its voluntary agency is employed in simply reproducing perceptions of the same kinds as those of which it had already been the subject, though often in new and perpetually varying modifications, so its effect is the mere renewal or prolongation of the same species of instinctive emotions, as it had enjoyed under their former influence.

These observations will enable us easily to discriminate between the physical nature of the mind, and its voluntary operations, and to determine what representations of its holiness and depravity are obnoxious and what are not, to the charge of directly or indirectly exhibiting them as physical attributes. It is apparent from them, that to ascribe to the mind a specific constitutional taste for divine things, of such

a nature that they necessarily affect it with pleasure, and to represent it as thence in itself morally excellent, is to exhibit its holiness, as far as that taste is concerned, as a physical attribute.

It is equally apparent, that to represent regeneration as consisting in the implantation in the mind of such a relish for spiritual things, by which perceptions of those objects instinctively awaken pleasurable emotions, and thence become motives, exciting the mind to choose them as the supreme and final source of happiness, is to represent that great work as consisting in a change of the physical constitution: since, as we have seen, the susceptibility of being affected in that manner by perceptions, has its foundation solely in the nature of the mind itself; and to implant such a susceptibility, therefore, where it did not before exist, must of course involve a change of that nature. In like manner, it is equally clear that to represent, that antecedently to regeneration a taste or disposition exists in the mind, of a precisely opposite nature, by which perceptions of divine things instinctively and necessarily excite aversion, and become motives to reject and discard those objects, and that that disposition is thus the cause of the mind's sinning, and is itself of a moral character, a violation of obligation, and worthy of punishment in the same manner as sinful actions are, is to exhibit the mind's depravity as a physical attribute.

To go still further, and represent the mind, antecedently to regeneration, as incapable even of perceptions of divine things, and to exhibit that incapacity as the cause of its sinning, and as in itself blameable, is in like manner manifestly to carry its depravity back of all its operations, into the constitution of the mind itself, and to exhibit it as an attribute of its physical nature. The same doctrine is involved

also in the representation, that regeneration is the communication to the mind of a capacity for apprehending divine things.

Let us now, with these positions in our eye, turn to the inquiry, whether the current representations presented by Calvinists, of the nature of man, exhibit his holiness and depravity as physical attributes.

1. It is a fundamental article of their philosophy, that the mind must be endowed by creation or regeneration with a specific constitutional relish for holiness, in order to be capable of exercising it; a susceptibility or taste, which has its foundation in the physical nature of the mind, and constitutes one of its essential attributes. Such is the theory of the reviewer himself, as is seen from the following passages.

"But it is not only objected that regeneration is a physical change, if anything beyond a change in the exercises of the soul is effected; but it is said, that the thing contended for is utterly unintelligible, incapable of definition or explanation. We are ready to acknowledge that it admits of no other explanation than that which is derived from stating its effects, and referring to cases of an analogous kind. There is in all men a social principle, as it is called, which is something else than a desire to live in society, because it is connatural, as may be inferred from its universality. There is a tendency in all men to love their children, which is something beside loving them; there is a tendency in man, also, to sympathize in the sufferings of others. It may be said, these are all constitutional tendencies, implanted in our nature. This is very true; but does saying this enable us to understand their nature? May it not be objected to those who employ this language, You are using words without meaning: what do you know of a social principle, distinct from the actual desire to live in society, or prior to its exercise? What idea can you form of a principle of self-love, excepting actually loving one's self? Are we then to deny that there are any such original propensities or tendencies as these

implanted in our nature, because we cannot directly conceive of them?' 'On the same principle, we might deny the existence of any of the original dispositions or tendencies of the soul. For they are as incapable of being defined, as the holy principle which is produced in regeneration.'

"If he were to say, that the effect is produced by the Holy Spirit, we should answer, that this can be done in only one of three ways, that we can conceive of. First, either by his direct agency producing the choice, in which case it would be no act of ours; or, secondly, by addressing such motives to our constitutional and natural principle of self-love, as should induce *us* to make the choice, in which case there would be no morality in the act; or thirdly, *by producing such a relish for the divine character, that the soul as spontaneously and as immediately embraces God as its portion, as it rejoices in the perception of beauty.* The thing contended for is not more unintelligible *than a hundred things, of like nature. Taste is the ready perception and quick feeling of natural beauty: that is, these are its effects.* But no one can directly conceive of it, as it is an attribute of the mind, either original or acquired. It is absolutely certain, however, that the man who does thus readily perceive and feel the beauty of natural objects, has a quality of mind which a clown does not possess. And we should be astonished to hear any one maintain, that there was no such thing as taste, but the exercise; that 'there can be no such thing as a principle of taste, or sense of beauty, distinct from the actual love of beauty.' We are disposed to think that no man can believe this; that the constitution of our nature forces us to admit, that if one man, under all circumstances, and at all times, manifest this quick sensibility to natural beauty, and another does not, there is some difference between the two, besides their acts; that there is some reason why, when standing before the same picture, one is filled with pleasure, and the other is utterly insensible. We cannot help believing, that one has taste, (*a quality, principle, or 'inward sense,'*) which the other does not possess; it matters not what it may be called. *It is the ground or reason of the diversity of their exercises, which lies back of the exercises themselves, and must be assumed to account for the difference of their nature.* Now there is moral as well as natural beauty; and it is no more unintelligible that there should be a 'sense', or taste, for the one, than for the other. The perfect

character of God, when exhibited to different men, produces delight and desire in some, repugnance in others. We instinctively ask why? Why do some perceive and delight in his moral beauty, while others do not? The answer, some love, and others do not, is no answer at all: it is merely saying the same thing in other words. There must be some reason why one perceives this kind of beauty, to which others are blind; why one is filled with love the moment it is presented, and the other with repugnance; and this reason must lie *back* of the mere exercise of this affection—must be something besides the act itself, and such as shall account for its nature."

The following passage, beyond the confirmation which it furnishes of the representation I have given of the reviewer's system, particularly merits attention, for the successful exhibition it presents of some of the errors with which the speculations on the subject in the Christian Spectator are fraught.

"It may be said, however, that the cases are not analogous; that the emotion excited by beauty is involuntary, while moral objects address themselves to the voluntary affections; and that it is admitted, that there is not only 'something' back of each exercise of love, but we are told distinctly what it is, viz. the soul with its essential attributes, its ultimate or supreme choice, or dominant affection, and the object in view of the mind. Accordingly it is easily accounted for—that when the character of God is presented, one man is filled with love, another with repugnance. The reason of the difference of these acts, does indeed lie back of the acts themselves; for it is found in the ultimate or supreme choice of the different individuals. But how is this to be accounted for? [a question which it belongs to the author in the Christian Spectator of this absurd scheme, to answer, and to him alone]. If there is no necessity for accounting for the particular character of the first or ultimate choice (if so it must needs be called;) there is no need of accounting for the others. The difficulty is not at all met by this statement. It is only pushed back from the secondary and subordinate, to the primary and dominant preference. There it returns. The question still is, why does the soul

of one man make this supreme choice of God, or in other words, love him, while another sets his affections on the world? There is precisely the same necessity for assuming some ground or reason for the nature of the first choice as for any acts subordinate and subsequent to it. Let us suppose two individuals called into existence, in the full maturity of their faculties; each has a soul with the same constitutional powers, or essential attributes; the one is filled with delight the moment the character of God is presented, and the other is not; or the one loves his Maker as soon as the idea of his excellence is perceived, the other does not. According to this theory there is no reason for this difference. There is nothing back of the first act of choice that is not common to both. If instead of two individuals we suppose two millions, one portion having their affections spontaneously called forth on their first view of their Maker, the other unaffected; we have only a greater number of effects without a cause, but the case is the same. It will not do to answer, that the choice is made under the influence of the desire of happiness, for this being common to all, is no reason for the difference of the result, which is the very thing to be accounted for. To say that the choice is made under the influence of the desire of happiness, is only to say, that when the character of God is presented, it gives pleasure. But the same character is presented in both cases; the same desire exists in both, yet in one it gives pleasure, is an object of desire; in the other it is not. This is the fact which is left entirely unaccounted for on the theory in question, and for which the mind as instinctively seeks a question [? solution] as it does for any other effect."

"We feel therefore a necessity for assuming, that there is 'something' back of the first moral act, besides the soul and its essential attributes, which will account for the nature of that act, which constitutes the reason why in the case supposed, the soul of the one individual rose immediately to God, and the other did not; and the 'something' assumed in this case, is no more indefinite and undefinable than the constitutional propensity to live in society, to love our children, or the mental quality called taste, all which are assumed from a necessity not more imperious than that which requires a holy principle to account for the delight experienced in view of the character of God. And if our Maker can endow us not only with the general susceptibility of love, but also with a specific disposition to love our children:

if he can give us a discernment and susceptibility of natural beauty, he may give us a taste for spiritual loveliness. And if that taste by reason of sin, is vitiated and perverted, he may restore it, by the influences of his spirit in regeneration."—p. 274–278.

The theory which it is his object in these passages to state and sustain, thus is, that the mind must possess a peculiar and specific constitutional relish for divine things, in order to be capable of loving them; and to this scheme he ascribes the high honour of enjoying the sanction of reason and nature so indubitably, as to render the belief of it universal and unavoidable—" that the constitution of our nature *forces* us to admit" it, and of being the only one that can possibly explain the varying phenomena of human agency.

Thus he exhibits this peculiar susceptibility as having its foundation in the nature of the mind, in the same manner as other constitutional susceptibilities, and its existence as demonstrated by the same considerations, as conduct us to the belief of their existence, such as the taste for natural beauty, the susceptibility of affection for offspring, of pleasure from society, and of sympathy with suffering. " If our Maker can endow us not only with the general susceptibility of love, but also with a specific disposition to love our children; if he can give us a discernment and susceptibility of natural beauty, he may give us *a taste for spiritual loveliness.* And if that taste by reason of sin, is vitiated and perverted, he may restore it by the influence of his spirit in regeneration." " We feel therefore a necessity for assuming that there is 'something' back of the first moral act, besides the soul and its essential attributes, which will account for the nature of that act, which constitutes the reason why, in the case supposed, the soul of the one individual rose immediately to God, and the other did not: and the 'something' assumed in this case, is no more

indefinite and undefinable, than the constitutional propensity to live in society, to love our children, or the mental quality, called taste, *all of which are assumed from a necessity not more imperious than that which requires a holy principle to account for the delight experienced in view of the character of God.*" This "taste for spiritual loveliness" is thus placed on precisely the same ground as a constitutional quality, as those other susceptibilities, which confessedly have their foundation in the nature of the soul; and its existence is exhibited as assumed from the same "imperious" "necessity" as theirs, and as demonstrated by the same reasons.

His theory accordingly exhibits the pleasurable emotions which the perception of divine things thus immediately awakens in minds endowed with this "taste for spiritual loveliness," as taking place spontaneously and unavoidably in the same manner as other instinctive emotions.

"God has created man with various susceptibilities, dispositions, or tendencies of mind toward objects without himself." "If a million of intelligent beings, the first moment they think of the character of God, are filled with desire and delight, it is as evident that they were created with a proneness or disposition to take pleasure in holiness, as it is that the hearts of mothers have an innate tendency to love their children, because they glow with delight the first moment they are given to them. Nothing we think but the most determined adherence to a speculative opinion, can prevent any man acknowledging that it is as possible for the mind to be created with this 'instinctive' love of holiness, as with a disposition for any other specific class of objects. And we think too that the vast body of men will agree with president Edwards, in thinking that 'such a disposition's being natural, or from a kind of instinct implanted in the mind in its creation,' is no objection to its being of a virtuous or moral character. Does the maternal instinct cease to be amiable, because it is natural?" "No one would say that the disposition to love ourselves or our children, depends on choice." "The affections no

more obey a determination of the mind, *than the emotions do*. A man can no more will to love, to hate, to be pleased or displeased, than he can will to be joyful or sorrowful, gay or sad, or even hot or cold, at any given moment."—pp. 282, 283, 290, 291.

It is the object indeed of a number of his pages, to show that these emotions awakened by divine things, *though excited spontaneously, and without the intervention of choice*, are still of a moral character, and worthy of praise and blame in the same manner as volitions are, and this exhibition of them as instinctive, not obeying "a determination of the mind," and unavoidable, runs through the whole web of his discussion, and is one of the most essential of his representations.

In whatever relation then, this "taste for spiritual loveliness" is contemplated, all his descriptions of its nature and the reasons which he employs to demonstrate its existence, carry us inevitably to the conclusion, that its foundation lies—if it have any whatever—in the substance of the mind itself, and forms an attribute, and one of the most essential of its physical constitution.

The propriety however of this conclusion, the reviewer most zealously disowns, and claims that no just ground whatever exists for the representation that his theory involves the doctrine of physical rectitude or depravity, either directly or by implication.

"The main principle, as before stated, which is assumed by those who make this charge is, that we can only regard the soul as to its substance on the one hand, and its actions on the other. If therefore there be any change wrought in the soul other than its acts, it must be a physical change. And if any tendency either to sin or holiness, exist prior to choice, it is a positive existence, a real entity. Thus the charge of physical depravity and physical regeneration is fairly

made out. We are constrained to confess, that if the premises are correct, the conclusions, revolting as they are, and affecting as they do the fair names of so large a portion of the christian church, are valid. The principle itself however, we believe to be a gratuitous assumption."—p. 271.

This is certainly one of the grounds on which the charge of involving the doctrine of physical depravity and regeneration is alleged against his theory,—and a legitimate one in my judgment; but it is by no means the only one by which that imputation is sustained. The chief consideration on which it rests,—of which the assumption he here inveighs against is one instrument of proving,—is that his representations of the nature of this "taste for spiritual loveliness," and mode of giving birth to its effects, and the reasons on which he relies to demonstrate its existence, all go to exhibit it as an attribute of the physical nature, and are dependent on that construction for their whole efficiency and significance.

Thus he places it, as we have seen in all his statements, on precisely the same ground as it regards its relation to the constitution, as the other constitutional susceptibilities of which he speaks, and which confessedly, in his own and the judgment of all, have their foundation in the nature of the mind, and are necessarily ranked among its physical attributes; he represents the emotions, moreover, to which it gives birth on the perception of divine things, as taking place without the intervention of volition, and unavoidably in the same manner as the effects of other attributes which are admitted to have their foundation in the constitution; and finally presents the consideration that it thus gives birth to these effects, as constraining us to admit its existence, by as "imperious" a "necessity," as that by which we are

forced to a similar conclusion in respect to other constitutional attributes. If there is any legitimate method then whatever, in which a constitutional attribute can be described, and its existence demonstrated, this is unquestionably of that class; and if this does not amount to such a description and demonstration, there is no conceivable mode in which such an attribute can be delineated with any certainty, or proved to exist; and we are left at once without any means of demonstrating that the mind has any physical attributes whatever, and consequently without any materials for the proof of its being.

The reasons which he alleges of his belief that this "principle" is "a gratuitous assumption," are as incompatible with his theory, as is that belief itself.

"It is inconsistent with the common, and, as we believe, correct idea of habits, both connatural and acquired. The word habit (habitus) was used by the old writers precisely in the same sense, as principle by President Edwards, as explained above, or disposition, as used and explained by President Dwight. That there are such habits or dispositions, which can be resolved neither into 'essential attributes,' nor 'acts,' we maintain to be the common judgment of mankind. Let us take for illustration, an instance of an acquired habit of the lowest kind, the skill of an artist. He has a soul with the same essential attributes as other men; his body is composed of the same materials; and the same law regulates the obedience of his muscular actions to his mind. By constant practice, he has acquired what is usually denominated skill: an ability to go through the processes of his art with greater facility, exactness, and success, than ordinary men. Take this man while asleep, or engaged in any indifferent occupation; you have a soul and body not differing in any of their essential attributes from those of other men. Still there is a difference. What is it? Must it be either 'a real existence, an entity,' an act, or nothing? It cannot be an 'entity,' for it is acquired; and it will hardly be maintained that a man can acquire a new essen-

tial attribute; neither is it an act, for the man has his skill when it is not exercised. Yet there is certainly 'something,' which is the ground of certainty, that, when called to go through the peculiar business of his art, he will do it with an ease and rapidity impossible for common men. It is as impossible not to admit that this ground or reason exists, in order to account for the effect, as it is not to admit the existence of the soul, to account for its exercises. By constant practice, a state of mind and body has been produced, adapted to secure these results, and which accounts for their character. But this is the definition of principle or habit as given above; a single circumstance is here wanting, which is found in other 'habits,' and that is, there is not the tendency or proneness to those particular acts, to which this state of mind is adapted. This difference, however, arises not from any difference in the 'habits' themselves, but from the nature of the faculties in which, so to speak, they inhere. A principle in the will (in its largest sense, including all the active powers), is not only a state of mind adapted to certain acts, but prone to produce them. This is not the case, at least to the same degree, with intellectual habits. Both classes, however, come within the definition given by President Edwards and Dr. Dwight—'a state of mind,' or 'foundation for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul.' The same remarks may be made with regard to habits of a more purely intellectual character. A man, by devoting himself to any particular pursuit, gradually acquires a facility in putting forth the mental exercises which it requires. This implies no change of essence in the soul; and it is not merely an act, which is the result of this practice. The result, whatever it is, is an attribute of the man under all circumstances, and not merely when engaged in the exercises wherein the habit is acquired." P. 271, 272.

This acquired "facility," however, is neither parallel, nor has any resemblance whatever, to the "taste for spiritual loveliness," which he attributes to the mind. Skill "in putting forth" a given species of acts, is not like the "spiritual sense," a constitutional attribute, which gives birth spontaneously to a peculiar class of effects, that have their whole foundation in that attribute; but is simply an acquired

"facility" of exerting the mind in a given way; the mere development or successful exercise of its powers, instead of those powers themselves, or any one of them. It is, in truth, nothing more nor less than knowledge, obtained by the repetition of a given act, or series of acts, in place of constituting a peculiar attribute or modification of essential attributes. All the attributes requisite for, and exerted in it, are possessed before the attainment of the skill, and that lies wholly in knowing how to exert them, so as to accomplish a given effect with success; precisely as the physical attributes exerted in skilful writing, are possessed before the art of forming letters is acquired; and the attainment of skill in that art, consists simply in learning to exert those attributes, in such a manner as to accomplish that effect with ease. The difference between a good penman, and one who has not learned the art of writing, has nothing whatever to do with the magnitude or number of their constitutional endowments. All the requisite materials for skill in it, as far as physical attributes are concerned, are possessed by all, whether cultivated or not.

This knowledge, therefore, has no resemblance to that "constitutional susceptibility," or "taste," which the reviewer ascribes to the mind, and represents as lying back of all acts whatever, as the cause of that class of acts from which its existence is inferred, and as giving birth to them involuntarily by the physical necessity of its nature. This total want of parallel, he has indeed virtually admitted: "A single circumstance is here wanting, which is found in other 'habits,' and that is, *there is not the tendency or proneness to* those particular acts, to which this state of mind is adapted;' that is, the skill of the artist is not an attribute of his nature, which is the cause of his acts, and gives birth to them involuntarily, but is simply a quality of those acts

themselves; whilst, on the other hand, the constitutional "taste for spiritual loveliness", is the sole *cause* of the acts, so far as their nature is concerned, from which its existence is inferred, gives birth to them by the mere necessity of its nature, and is of course, therefore, an essential attribute of the mind itself, instead of a mere mode, like the other, in which it exerts its attributes, or a mere quality of its acts.

The skill of the artist, in place of bearing any resemblance to the reviewer's "taste for spiritual loveliness," is precisely like the facility acquired by practice, in putting forth the peculiar acts, of which that "taste," according to his theory, is the foundation and involuntary cause. The affections are as susceptible, by exercise, of development, as any other mental attributes. By those who cherish them, by absorbing themselves in the contemplation of the objects toward which they are exercised, enlarging their views, and quickening their associations, an ease and intensity in exerting them are acquired, as superior as any that are ever attained in other modes of mental exertion. This fact, however, does not furnish any reason for confounding the constitutional properties of the mind with the modes in which it exerts them. None of his illustrations, therefore, nor reasonings in any of these passages, relieve us from the necessity of regarding this "taste," which he ascribes to the mind as a physical attribute, nor furnish any evidence that "the principle" assumed by those whom he opposes, "that we can only regard the soul, as to its substance on the one hand, and its actions on the other," is, as he represents, "a gratuitous assumption." He adds, on this latter topic, the following passage:

"But to come nearer to the case in hand. We say, a man has a malignant disposition, or an amiable disposition. What is to be un-

derstood by these expressions? Is it merely that he often indulges malignant or amiable feelings? or is it not, rather, that there is an habitual proneness or tendency to their indulgence? Surely the latter. But if so, the principle stated above, that we can regard the soul only as to its substance or its actions, cannot be correct; for the result of a repetition of acts of the same kind, is an abiding tendency, which is itself neither an act (emanant or immanent), nor an 'entity.' Here, then, is the soul with its essential attributes—an habitual tendency to certain exercises, and the exercises themselves. The tendency is not an act, nor an active state of the feelings in question; for it would be a contradiction to say, that a man, whose heart was glowing with parental affection, or filled for the time with any other amiable feeling, had at the same moment the malignant feelings in an active state, although there might exist the greatest proneness to their exercise."—p. 273.

Here, however, as in the former instance, the case which he states has no parallel with, or resemblance to "the taste for spiritual loveliness," of which he is treating. That "taste" (a quality, principle, or "inward sense"), "is the ground or reason" of the exercises, which are referred to it as their cause, "which lies back of the exercises themselves, and must be assumed to account for—their nature." But the "tendency" of which he here treats, is, by his own statement, "the result of a repetition of acts of the same kind," is acquired therefore, and stands accordingly on precisely the same ground as the skill of the artist, and like that, is a mere facility of putting forth acts of the kind, arising from the more perfect knowledge of which the mind has become possessed by experience, or in other words, its quicker associations and more definite perceptions, consequent on its familiarity with the objects about which its affections are exercised. He proceeds:

"We have seen no analysis of such dispositions, which satisfies us

that they can be reduced to acts; for it is essential to the nature of an act, that it should be a matter of consciousness. This is true of those which are immanent acts of the will, or ultimate choices, (by which a fixed state of the affections is meant to be expressed,) as well as of all others. But a disposition or principle as explained above, is not a matter of consciousness; a man may be aware that he has a certain disposition, as he is aware of the existence of his soul, from the consciousness of its acts; but the disposition itself is not a subject of direct consciousness. It exists when the man is asleep, or in a swoon, and unconscious of any thing. Neither can these habits be with any propriety called a choice or permanent affection; for in many cases, they are a mere proneness to acts which have their foundation in a constitutional principle of the mind. Our object at present is merely to show, that we must admit that there are mental habits, which cannot be resolved either into essential attributes of the soul, fixed preferences, or subordinate acts; and consequently, that those who believe in dispositions prior to all acts, do not necessarily maintain that such dispositions are of the essence of the soul itself. If it be within the compass of the divine power to produce in us that, which by constant exercise we can produce in ourselves, then a holy principle or habit may be the result of the Spirit's influence in regeneration, without any physical change having been wrought."—p. 273, 274.

This argument, on the validity of which the success of his effort to evade the charge of physical depravity, wholly depends, obviously consists of two steps only; the assumption on the one hand, that the facility in putting forth a given species of acts, which is acquired by their repetition, is a genuine "taste," "abiding tendency," or "disposition," like that which he ascribes to the mind, and at the same time, is neither an attribute of the mind, an act, nor an attribute of an act; and on the other, the inference from that assumption, that if this acquired disposition "cannot be resolved either into essential attributes of the soul, fixed preferences, or subordinate acts," then the disposition which

he represents as " prior to all acts," may also exist without being " of the essence of the soul itself," and may therefore be taught without involving the doctrine of physical depravity;—a slender foundation truly, for the support of so formidable a conclusion.

The assumption itself has already been proved to be totally unauthorized, by showing that this acquired " facility" is clearly traceable to a mere change in the perceptions, is the result of experience or increased knowledge, and accordingly has no resemblance whatever to attributes that are prior to all acts, and produce their effects involuntarily.

Its impropriety indeed, it has also been shown, he has himself substantially conceded, in the admission that this " facility," which is " the result of a repetition of acts," wants the most essential characteristic of the constitutional disposition which is " prior to all acts;"—that of a " tendency or proneness to those particular acts,"—that, in other words, of producing its effects *instinctively;*—" a single circumstance," that without any further evidence demonstrates beyond controversy, that the power by which those effects are thus supposed to be produced, must, if it exist, be an attribute of the physical nature.

The assumption being thus totally unsustained, the conclusion from it is left entirely without support, and the argument in place of showing that the position which it is its object to overthrow, is wholly gratuitous, is seen to be itself dependent on an assumption advanced not only without proof, but against the most essential and manifest facts. Nor is there any other conceivable process, by which it can be shown, that this taste, which he ascribes to the mind, is not an attribute of its nature. If such involuntary effects as he ascribes to it, cannot justly be regarded as caused by

the physical nature of the mind, there plainly is no class whatever, whether of sensation, emotion, or reason, that can with any propriety be traced to such an origin; and we are left without any thing that can be regarded as an effect of the mind itself, and thence without any means by which we can either discover its nature, or demonstrate its existence. There is no alternative therefore left us, but either to regard this taste, if the reviewer's description of its nature, and mode of producing effects is to be our guide, as a physical attribute of the mind, or to deny that any such attribute whatever, or even the mind itself exists; nor is there any alternative left to the reviewer but either to admit that it belongs to that rank, or wholly to retract his representations of its nature, and concede either that it has no existence whatever, or is a mere attribute of action.

This doctrine of a specific constitutional taste for divine things, which the reviewer thus employs himself in stating and endeavouring to sustain, is likewise, and has ever been, a fundamental article of the Calvinistic system. Such is of course the reviewer's representation, as it is professedly in vindication of that scheme that he states and endeavours to maintain it. It is nothing more nor less than the common doctrine of taste, disposition, relish, tendency, or principle taught in the volumes of Dwight, Smalley, and Edwards, and held by the great body of the clergy of our country. Of this fact sufficient proof is furnished in the following passages from the review.

"President Edwards not only admits that moral principles or habits may and must exist in the soul prior (in the order of nature) to moral action, but his whole system of practical theology, as it seems to us, rests on this foundation. The great fundamental principle of his work on the Affections is this.—All gracious or spiritual affections

presuppose and arise from spiritual views of divine truth. These views the natural man neither has, nor can have, while he remains such. Hence arises the necessity of such a change being wrought in the state of the soul, that it can perceive the real beauty and excellence of divine things. This change consists in imparting to the soul what he calls 'a new sense,' or a new taste or relish, or principle adapted to the perception and love of spiritual excellence. Were we to attempt to exhibit all the evidence which might be adduced, in proof of the fact that his views were such as we have represented, we should be obliged to quote a great part of the work just mentioned. We refer the reader especially to what he says on the first and fourth signs of gracious affections. With regard to the nature of regeneration, we quote only a single passage. After having stated that the exercises of the true christian are specifically different from those of unsanctified men, *he infers that if the exercises are different, the principle whence they proceed must be different*, or there must be, as it were, a new spiritual sense, or a principle of new kind of perception or spiritual sensation. The nature of this 'new sense' he thus explains.

" 'This new sense and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new *faculties*, but are new principles of nature. I use the word principles, for want of a word of a more determinate signification. By a *principle of nature*, in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular kind, or manner of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit, or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition, to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind; so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature. So this new spriritual sense, is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that the new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will. The Spirit of God in all his operations on the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or some way acts upon natural principles; but gives no new spiritual principles.'

"We have never met with a stronger, or more formal statement of the doctrine, which we are endeavouring to support.

"Dr. Bellamy seems to hold the same doctrines as President Edwards with regard to spiritual blindness, the necessity of divine illumination prior to the exercise of any holy affection, and the nature of regeneration." "Dr. Dwight taught the same doctrine and that clearly and definitely. In his discourse on the Nature of Regeneration, he says, 'The change of heart consists in a relish for spiritual objects, communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost.' That 'this relish' was antecedent according to his view, to all holy acts, there can be no doubt. Because he expressly asserts it, and because his arguments go to prove it." "From various passages which occur in the pamphlet of Dr. Tyler, we infer that he holds the same doctrine. The same principle (that moral disposition may exist antecedently to all moral acts), is also frequently and clearly asserted by Dr. Woods, of Andover, in his controversy with Dr. Ware. We refer to the opinions of these distinguished men, to show how united Calvinists, old and new, are in their views on this point, and that if the charge of believing in physical depravity and physical regeneration be sustained, it lies on almost the whole Calvinistic world." p. 268—271.

The theory of the reviewer being thus shown by him to be the common scheme of the Calvinistic world, in proving that as he has presented it, it exhibits the "taste for spiritual loveliness," which it ascribes to the mind, as a physical attribute, I have at the same time demonstrated the justice of representing their theory as involving that doctrine.

2. This taste for spiritual loveliness, which the Calvinistic theory thus exhibits as a physical attribute, it also represents as in itself morally excellent, in precisely the same sense as obedient volitions are.

Of this sufficient evidence is furnished by the foregoing quotations, and the following passage from the pages of the reviewer.

"That Adam was created holy, that is, with a holy disposition, which existed prior to his first holy act, though necessarily destructive of the very first principle of the theory referred to, has been considered as a fixed point among Calvinists. We have already seen that Dr. Dwight did not think it necessary to prove it. Because, he says, every man who believes the mind something more than ideas and exercises, and does not admit the doctrine of casualty, will acknowledge it. President Edwards, in his work on original sin, has a whole chapter in which he endeavours to prove that our first parents were created in righteousness, or as he expresses it, "with holy principles and dispositions;"—"that a virtuous disposition of mind may be before a virtuous act of choice, and that it is not necessary that there should first be thought, reflection, and choice, before there can be any virtuous disposition." p. 282, 283.

But their representation of this disposition, as in itself virtuous and holy, is so palpable a characteristic of the quotations already offered, and numerous passages from distinguished Calvinistic authors, that are hereafter to occur in the discussion, and is so fully recognised and sanctioned by the reviewer, that the exhibition of any further proofs of it must be unnecessary.

On the whole then, these considerations demonstrate beyond all rational controversy, that the Calvinistic theory respecting the holiness of man, so far as this "taste" is concerned, exhibits it as a physical attribute.

They prove with equal certainty, that it exhibits his depravity likewise as an attribute of the physical constitution, in the opposite theory of a "sinful disposition" or "principle," which it ascribes to the mind, and represents as in like manner "concreated with us," and "the permanent fund" of all our depraved actions. The evidences which demonstrate the conclusion of the foregoing argument, concur in sustaining with equal force the propriety of this,

and render it unnecessary to offer a repetition of the reasoning.

Were I, therefore, now to close this discussion, I might justly regard myself as vindicated from the charge of misrepresentation and mistake, in ascribing the doctrine of physical depravity to the Calvinistic system. The truth however of the representations which I have now and heretofore given of that theory, is susceptible of so much more ample demonstration, that it were scarcely compatible with justice to the subject to leave its numerous proofs without some further notice. I shall take leave therefore to point out several other features of that theory in which this doctrine exhibits itself, and varying modes in which it is taught, and to notice such further statements of the reviewer in reference to them, as require animadversion. It will thus be seen that the Calvinists have not merely taught the existence of this specific taste for spiritual loveliness, in their formal speculations on the subject, but have carried it through all the ramifications of their system, and adjusted to it their statements and representations on all the various topics with which it stands connected.

I. Thus they represent Adam as having been created with a constitutional taste for holiness, by which the perception of divine things instinctively and necessarily excited in him obedient affections.

"When God created Adam, there was a period of his existence after he began to be, antecedent to that in which he exercised the first volition. Every man who believes the mind to be something besides ideas and exercises, and does not admit the doctrine of casualty, will acknowledge, that in this period the mind of Adam was in such a state, that he was propense to the exercise of virtuous volitions rather than sinful ones. This state of mind has been com-

monly styled disposition, temper, inclination, heart, &c.' "This disposition in Adam was the cause whence his virtuous volitions proceeded; the reason why they were virtuous and not sinful."—Dwight's Theology, vol. i. p. 411.

"Human nature must be created with some dispositions; a disposition to relish some things as good and amiable, and to be averse to other things as odious and disagreeable." "If man had at first the highest relish of those things that were the most excellent and beautiful, a disposition to have the quickest and highest delight in those things that were the most worthy of it; then his dispositions were morally right and amiable, and never can be decent and excellent in a higher sense." "When God made man at first, he implanted in him two kinds of principles. There was an inferior kind, which may be called natural, being the principles of mere human nature, such as self-love, and the natural appetites and passions." "Besides these there were superior principles that were spiritual, holy, and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love, wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness, which are called in scripture the divine nature. These principles may in some sense be called *supernatural*, being (however *concreated or connate*, yet) such as are above those principles that are essentially implied in—mere human nature."—Edward's Works vol. vi. p. 428, 429.

"Created holiness must be prior to knowledge and volition, as much as native sin. Yet Moses says man *was* created in the image of God. Solomon lays it down as a certain truth "that God made man upright." And the apostle Paul speaks of a "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Both the first and second creation unto good works spoken of in scripture, necessarily suppose that there may be holiness in man prior to his having any actual perceptions or exercises." "If any should say, We know nothing what either a good or a wicked heart is, before or distinct from all volitions and exercises, and have therefore no reason to think there is or can be any such thing. To this it may be answered: We know as well what a good or bad disposition is prior to virtuous or vicious exercises, as we do what reason is prior to rational actions, as well as we know what a human soul is prior to the operations of it, and as well as we know what God is distinct from his

works. No unseen cause, can be known from seen effects, any better than the disposition of a man may be known from his words and actions. We may just as well disbelieve that there is a spirit in man, or a God that governs the world, as that there is any such thing as a wicked or good heart."—*Smalley's Sermons*, pp. 88, 190.

"There is a two-fold conformity required of man; a conformity of *the powers of his soul* to the law, which you may call habitual righteousness; and a conformity of all his actions to it, which is actual righteousness. Now God made man habitually righteous; man was to make himself actually righteous: the former was the stock God put into his hand, the latter the improvement he should have made of it. The sum of what I have said, is that the righteousness wherein man was created, was the conformity of all the faculties and powers of his soul to the moral law. This is what we call original righteousness, which man was originally endowed with. We may take it up in these three things. First, man's understanding was a lamp of light. He had perfect knowledge of the law and of his duty accordingly." "Secondly.—*His will lay straight with the will of God.* There was no corruption in it, no bent or inclination to evil." "The will of man then was directed and naturally inclined to God and goodness, though mutably. It was *disposed by its original make* to follow the Creator's will, as the shadow does the body; and was not left in an equal balance of good and evil; for at that rate he had not been upright, and habitually conform to the law; which in no moment can allow the creature not to be inclined toward God as his chief end, more than it can allow man to be a God to himself." "Thirdly.—His affections were orderly, pure, and holy; which is a necessary part of that uprightness wherein man was created." Man's sensitive appetite was indeed naturally carried out toward objects grateful to the senses. For seeing man was made up of body and soul—it is plain that man was naturally inclined both to spiritual and sensible good; yet to spiritual good, the chief good as his ultimate end. And therefore his sensitive motions and inclinations were subordinate to his reason and will, which lay straight with the will of God, and were not in the least contrary to the same."—*Boston's Fourfold State.*

"We learn from the scriptures that man was at first created up-

right after the image of God, and adorned with purity and rectitude. It is the dictate also of reason, for God who is supremely pure and excellent, can give birth to nothing that is not spotless and perfect. Man however could not have been thus perfect, if destitute of rectitude. By his original righteousness is meant, a holy and righteous habit—*not acquired*, as the schoolmen are accustomed to represent—but infused, or rather concreated with man, and so perfecting all his faculties, both superior and inferior, as to render him propense to obedience to the will of God.

"But this subject demands a more accurate explication. Socinus on the one hand totally denies this original righteousness; the papists on the other, acknowledge an original righteousness, but do not admit that it belonged to the nature of man as it was first created, but hold that it was subsequently added to his nature as a supernatural gift. Each of these sentiments the reformed reject, and attribute original righteousness to man, as he was created, and affirm that it was natural to him. To express their views more intelligibly, they represent it as natural in a three-fold sense; 1st, that it is in nature, precisely as all parts of man are, with their faculties and habits; 2d, that it is by nature, as all actions are that flow from the nature of man: 3d, that it is propagated and communicated along with nature as involved in it, in the same manner as the elements of constitutional peculiarities are communicated along with nature from parents to offspring. They accordingly affirm that righteousness was natural to man as he was created by God, because God endowed his nature with it. For it belongs to the habits and qualities with which his nature was gifted as that of a rational creature formed for the knowledge, love, and praise of God. That therefore, God communicated it to man along with nature, so that, if man had not sinned, he would through and along with his nature have conveyed to his posterity the image of God with which he was adorned, his entire perfectness and original rectitude."—*Trigland's Refutation of the Remonstrants*, chap. vii.

The ground in all these passages, on which this original rectitude or connate "disposition to relish that which is good," is ascribed to the mind, is thus obviously that on which the existence of its other constitutional attributes is

customarily affirmed. It was created, as they represent, along with the soul, was therefore a real existence, "entity,' or "quality," as much as any other constitutional attribute. It is an essential "quality" also, or ingredient of its nature, without which it would not, it is represented, have possessed any conformity to the divine image. It existed antecedently to the commencement of moral agency, before either any volitions or perceptions had taken place, and was "the cause whence volitions proceeded, the reason why they were virtuous and not sinful," in the same manner as the understanding is the cause of perceptions, and its nature the reason that such perceptions take place in it as those which are excited by the influence of external agents. And it gave birth to its effects spontaneously, precisely as perceptions take place in the understanding. It was "a disposition to have the quickest and highest delight in those things which were the most worthy of it," which instinctively gave birth to that delight on the perception of the objects which were adapted to excite it, in the same manner as other involuntary emotions are excited by the perception of their appropriate objects. To deny, therefore, after all, that this disposition was a physical attribute, is manifestly as inconsistent with all these representations, and as absurd, as to deny that any of its other attributes are of that nature, and is to abandon every ground on which any of its essential qualities can be proved to exist. If a quality which is created along with the soul and belongs to its nature, which is original and not acquired or subsequently superadded to its constitution, which exists antecedently to all its operations, and produces effects involuntarily, still is not an attribute of its physical constitution, it is manifestly supremely idle to claim that nature for any of its attributes, or to

imagine that any proofs can be found within the sphere of our knowledge, of the existence of any such qualities.

II. They exhibit this disposition as having been eradicated from the constitution in consequence of the fall.

"When man sinned and broke God's covenant, and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart."—*Edwards's Works*, vol. vi. *p.* 430.

"As Adam was the root and stock of the whole human family, it follows that his revolt was a rebellion of the whole race, and that therefore he involved not only himself, but all his posterity along with him in that sin and corruption, so that all, through his defection, are constituted sinners, and born destitute of true righteousness, incapable of that happiness which is conformed to the divine law, prone to all evil, and obnoxious to temporal and eternal death."—*Trigland's Refutation*, chap. ii.

As that original righteousness was, according to their theory, an attribute of the physical nature, its expulsion from the constitution as here described, must of course have involved a change of that nature.

III. They represent that on the eradication of this attribute, the remaining properties of his nature constituted an equal and opposite susceptibility of instinctive aversion to divine things, and pleasure from forbidden objects.

"The Bible appears to speak of positive sin in the heart of man, antecedently to sinful actions, or words, or even thoughts, and as being the cause of all these.

"I do not suppose indeed that there are any evil principles or instincts in us, so radical that they must have been created by the immediate power of God. The corruption of our whole nature I believe primarily consists in the want of original righteousness, or of a good disposition. From self-love and those appetites and passions which are not in themselves sinful, when one is destitute of virtue,

that is of the governing love of God and his neighbour, I conceive will naturally be formed all those roots of bitterness which springing up, trouble us.

" That there are however propensities to evil actions in depraved human nature, seems plainly taught in the holy scriptures, and this appears necessary to be supposed, in order to account for the sinful volitions of men, and their wicked external conduct." " In these several passages this idea seems plainly intended and expressed; that there are in fallen man propensities of nature to moral evil. And that it must be so, may be concluded from the evil volitions and actions of men, with as much certainty as the tree is known by its fruit, or as any cause can be learnt from its constant visible effects." —*Smalley's Sermons*, pp. 143, 144.

" An hereditary corruption is transmitted to all that naturally descend from him. If Adam had continued in his obedience, the spiritual as well as the natural life, had been conveyed to his children; but for his rebellion he lost his primitive rectitude, and contracted an universal corruption, which he derives to all his posterity. And as in a disease there is a defect of health, and a distemper of the humors that affects the body, so in the depravation of nature, there is, not the mere want of holiness, but a strong proclivity to sin."—*Bates' Divine Att.* chap. iii.

" Man's sinfulness as fallen, consists in the corruption of his nature, or a propensity or inclination to all evil, which is commonly called original sin."—*Ridgely's Body of Divinity.*

" There is in the unrenewed will an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God," " an averseness to good," " a natural proneness to evil," " an awful bent toward sin." " Men have it by nature. They owe it, not to their nature as qualified at man's creation by his Maker, but to their nature as vitiated and corrupted by the fall; to the vicious quality or corruption of their nature, which is their principle of action."—*Boston's Fourfold State.*

"The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil."—*Westminster Confession.*

"This sin is called original, or the sin of origin, both because at the first, or immediately after the first origin of man, it invaded him and all his faculties with its infection, in consequence of his revolt from God, and because it is the origin and cause of all his depraved appetites, and thence of all his actual transgressions."

"Man was created after the image of God, and furnished with the gifts and endowments in which that consists; but after his fall, he begat a son in his own likeness, bereft of that divine image, and formed of the vicious qualities which are its opposites."

"That all the posterity of Adam are naturally propense to the hatred of God and each other, the Remonstrants must themselves acknowledge, if they adhere to their confession, in which they state 'that all men, through that one sin of Adam, became divested of true righteousness, which is necessary to the attainment of eternal life;' inasmuch as such must necessarily carry in themselves a propensity to the hatred of God and one another; for that true righteousness, which is necessary to the attainment of salvation, is the love of God and man. Man, therefore, divested of that righteousness, must necessarily be prone to its opposite, unless the Remonstrants choose to represent him as converted into a mere block, without reason, will, or affection, of any kind whatever."—*Trigland's Refutation*, chap. xii. p. 51.

"As the spiritual life of Adam depended on his continued union to his Creator, his alienation from him was the death of his soul. Nor is it strange that his revolt, which perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth, involved his race in ruin. The whole creation groans, says Paul, having unwillingly become involved in corruption. Is the reason asked? It is doubtless visited with a portion of the punishment which is due to man, for whom it was created. As, then, in consequence of his transgression, the curse thus diffused itself in every direction, and spread over the whole world, there is nothing irrational in the doctrine that it was conveyed by propagation to all his posterity also. After, therefore, the divine image was obliterated in himself, he not only suffered, in punishment of his sin, the loss of wisdom, strength, sanctity, truth, righteousness, the ornaments with which he was originally adorned, and the succession in their place of the most odious pests, blindness, emptiness,

impurity, vanity, unrighteousness, but also involved his posterity in the same evils. This is that hereditary corruption which the ancients denominated original sin, meaning, by the term sin, the depravation of that nature which was originally good and pure. This was a subject of much discussion among them, as nothing is more abhorrent to common sense, than that all mankind should be held responsible for the fault of one, and sin thus rendered common to all. This seems to have been the reason that the earliest teachers in the church referred to the subject but very obscurely, or at least treated it with less perspicuity than it merited. Their timidity, however, did not prevent the rise of Pelagius, and the propagators of his impious pretence, that Adam only injured himself by his transgression; that no evil resulted from it to his posterity. By thus craftily veiling the disease from the eye, it was Satan's intention, obviously, to render it irremediable. When, however, it was clearly demonstrated from the Scriptures, that sin was transmitted from Adam to all his posterity, Pelagius perversely asserted that it was conveyed to them through imitation merely, instead of propagation. In opposition to this, the orthodox, and Augustine more especially, laboured to demonstrate that we are not corrupted by an external and adventitious viciousness, but bring a natural depravity along with us at our birth. The denial of this was an act of consummate effrontery; those, however, who from their acquaintance with the writings of that distinguished father, have become aware of the brutish presumption of Pelagius and his followers in regard to other subjects, will not be surprised at their rashness in respect to this. It certainly is not a matter of doubt, that David confesses himself to have been begotten in iniquity, and that in sin his mother conceived him; nor is he there referring to the sins of his father or mother, but in order to express more adequately the goodness of God toward himself, makes confession of his personal depravity from the period of his conception; and as that was not peculiar to him, it should be regarded as denoting the common lot of the race. All, therefore, who descend from that impure original, are born infected with the contagion of sin; yes, in the sight of God, we are all polluted and odious, before we see the light of life. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one, we are assured. We are thus taught, that the impurity of parents is so transmitted to their offspring, that all, without exception,

are defiled in their origin; and the first rise of this pollution is not to be found, except by ascending to the first parent of all as its fountain. It is thus to be regarded as certain, that Adam was not the progenitor only of human nature, but its root, as it were; and that by his corruption, accordingly, the whole human race, as a matter of course, became depraved.

"But to make myself more thoroughly understood, let me define original sin. It is not my design critically to examine all the varying definitions of it which writers have advanced, but simply to offer one which seems to me most happily expressive of the truth. Let original sin, then, be regarded as an hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all parts of the mind, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us those works which the scriptures denominate the works of the flesh; and it is this, peculiarly, which Paul frequently denominates sin, and the works which spring from it, such as adulteries, thefts, murders, and the like, he accordingly calls the fruits of sin, though they also are frequently expressly called sins, both in his writings and in other portions of the sacred volume.

"Two things then are here distinctly to be observed: that our nature being thus vitiated in all its parts, we are already, on account of this corruption alone, justly held convicted and condemned before God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness and purity; and that this perversity never suspends its activity within us, but perpetually exerts itself in the production of those fruits which I have spoken of as the works of the flesh, like a blazing furnace ceaselessly evolving flames and sparks, or a fountain pouring forth its waters without end. Those, therefore, who have represented original sin as consisting in the want of that original righteousness which we ought to possess, although their definition includes all that is contained in the thing, yet they have not expressed its force and activity with sufficient emphasis; for our nature is not only totally empty of all good, but is so full and fertile of evils of every description, that it cannot but give birth to them.

"Those who have denominated it concupiscence, would not have expressed it too strongly, had they stated, that every thing whatever that there is in man, from his understanding to his will, from his spirit

to his flesh, is totally pervaded and polluted by this concupiscence, or in one word, that his whole nature of itself is nothing else than concupiscence.

"I have accordingly represented all parts of the soul as having become pervaded by sin, since the abandonment by Adam of the fountain of righteousness; for he was not only prompted to transgression by the impulses of his inferior appetites, but a heaven-daring impiety got possession of the very citadel of his understanding, and pride penetrated the deep recesses of his heart."

"The will is held in such servitude to sin, that it cannot incline, much less devote itself to obedience." "The power of exerting volitions, however, still remains,—though it inclines, and rushes as it were with intense affection, to sin,—since man, in involving himself in this necessity, did not divest himself of the faculty itself of choice, but only of its healthfulness."

"But some are perplexed, from their inability to distinguish between necessity and compulsion. If, however, any one were to ask them, whether God is not necessarily good, and the devil necessarily evil, what would be their answer? for such is the connexion of God's goodness with his divinity, that he is not more necessarily God, than he is necessarily good. On the other hand, the devil is so alienated from all good, that he cannot possibly do any thing that is not evil. Should any one sacrilegiously object, that God can merit but little praise for his goodness, if thus constrained to preserve it, it is an obvious and sufficient answer that it is his infinite goodness, and not a forcible compulsion, that is the reason of his inability to do evil. If, therefore, the fact that he is under a necessity of doing that which is good, is no impediment to his acting freely in it, and if the devil still sins voluntarily, though totally unable to act in any other way than sinfully; who will say that man does not sin as voluntarily, although under an invincible necessity of sinning? This necessity Augustine always affirmed; and even, when urged by the cavils of Celestius, continued to assert, that it was by liberty that man had involved himself in sin, but that the penal depravity which followed, had converted that liberty into a necessity; and he was accustomed, whenever he alluded to the subject, to speak in this manner of the necessary servitude of the will.

"This important distinction ought, then, to be kept in mind, that man, as depraved by the fall, still sins voluntarily, not unwilling or by constraint; from an intense propensity of mind, not from a violent coaction; from the impulse of his own lust, not from external force; still, such is the depravity of his nature, that he cannot possibly be excited nor impelled to anything that is not evil."—*Calvin's Institutes*, book ii. chap. 1, 3.

All these descriptions of the condition of the mind after the fall, thus exhibit its whole nature as converted, as it were, into a mere susceptibility of sinful emotions. Its depravity is defined as consisting in that constitutional tendency, and as being such, that the perception of divine things instinctively and universally awakens aversion, and the apprehension of other objects excites in like manner involuntary gratification, and hurries it resistlessly to transgression. The existence of these effects thus ascribed to the mind, as we have already seen, can never be accounted for, except as instinctive and unavoidable results of a constitutional susceptibility; and no such susceptibility can be conceived to exist, except as it has its foundation in the physical nature, in the same manner as other essential attributes.

These writers also exhibit this natural propensity to moral evil as in itself sinful, in the same manner as sinful actions are. As they hold that the mind, when endowed with original righteousness, was in its nature conformed to the divine law, and was thence in itself morally excellent "in the highest sense;" so they represent it as having become by the loss of that rectitude, a violation of that law, and guilty, consequently, and odious, in the same sense as it is for disobedient actions. Its nature itself is thus exhibited as being positively sinful, "antecedently to sinful actions or

words, or even thoughts, and as the cause of all these;" and accordingly is expressly declared to be guilty, for being what it is, and obnoxious to everlasting punishment. The language of Calvin is, "that our nature being thus vitiated in all its parts, we are already, on account of this corruption alone, justly held convicted and condemned before God."

IV. In conformity with these views, they regard moral means, no matter by what agency they are employed, nor to what extent they are carried, as utterly incompetent, from their nature, and unadapted to excite the mind in its unregenerate state to the exercise of obedience.

This is the representation, as I have heretofore had occasion to show, of Dr. Griffin, President Dwight, Dr. Smalley, President Edwards, and the whole Calvinistic world without exception; and is the necessary result of the doctrine that the mind must possess a specific taste for divine things, in order to be capable of loving them. If such a taste is essential as a cause to the existence of obedient volitions, it is clear that no moral influence can ever excite a mind wholly destitute of it, to the exercise of such acts, nor have any tendency whatever to the production of them. This absolute denial to moral means of all adaptation to sway the mind to obedience, is thus in fact a denial of its physical capacity for right actions. If such a capacity were possessed, it would undoubtedly be possible, at least to divine power, to bring it into exercise, and through the instrumentality therefore of motives, as it is under their influence alone, that the exertion of the voluntary powers ever does or can take place. A more absolute denial therefore of the mind's physical capability of obedience, while unrenewed

cannot be imagined, than is involved in this doctrine. For it denies even to the almighty and omniscient Spirit the power of bringing it to exert right actions, in that way in which alone it can possibly be excited to obedience, without a change of its physical nature; and if God cannot cause it to exert such a capacity, it is clear beyond controversy that it does not possess it.

And in like manner in ascribing to the mind, on the other hand, a depraved disposition, by which all motives that can reach it, instinctively excite it to sinful affections, and in denying to God the possibility of employing a moral influence that can prompt it to any other actions, they also present to us an absolute denial of the mind's capacity for any other agency, than that which is a violation of the divine law.

V. From these views of the inadequacy of a moral influence to change the mind, it follows that a purely physical agency, must be regarded as necessary to the production of that effect, and consequently that the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit is wholly of that kind.

Such accordingly is the current doctrine on the subject, as is admitted by the reviewer, and as it were easy to show, were it necessary, by numerous proofs from the most distinguished writers. Of course, therefore, the agency of the Spirit, if of that nature, must be employed in producing a change of the physical constitution.

VI. They accordingly represent regeneration as consisting in the implantation in the mind, of a taste for divine things, in constitution and moral character, precisely resembling that with which Adam is supposed by them to have

been originally endowed, and which, therefore, from all their representations of its nature, and mode of giving birth to its effects, is obviously, as we have seen, an attribute of the physical constitution.

This doctrine of physical rectitude and depravity is thus an essential ingredient of the whole fabric of their theory, and one of its most distinctive and palpable characteristics. In place of being indebted at all for its existence to a forced construction of the terms in which it is expressed, it is itself the sole ground of the use of that language—is assumed, affirmed, and taught in as various forms, and as specific a manner, as many other essential articles in the Calvinistic system, and is itself the ground on which not a few of its subordinate positions are held and inculcated.

The reviewer presents as an additional and important proof of injustice in ascribing to Calvinists the doctrine in question, the fact that the statements of so many of that body are obviously inconsistent with it, and that moreover by many of them it is distinctly disclaimed. These considerations however furnish but very inadequate ground for the conclusion which he alleges them to sustain. The fact that many of the most acute, learned, and conscientious among the Calvinists, and I may add their whole body, entertain many positions essentially incompatible with this doctrine, is no decisive proof that the doctrine itself is not in fact an ingredient of their theoretical system. In place of that, such an inconsistency is what might naturally be expected. It does not follow from their having fallen into an error in their speculations on this subject, that their views on all others must be equally erroneous. In a great portion of their discussions they proceed on the principles of common sense, and are undoubtedly correct, and in many instances their views and

statements on this subject are so modified by the important truths which they hold and the powerful influence over them of consciousness and common sense, as to correspond very nearly with fact, though at the expense of undermining the foundation of their theory. Thus they universally urge on the unregenerate the obligation to repentance and faith, precisely as though no physical obstacle to their exercise were imagined to exist in the constitution, and address the various motives of the gospel to the conscience and heart, in the same manner as though they were regarded as appropriate means of exciting to obedience.

All this, however, furnishes no proof that we are not to be guided in our views of the language in which they treat of this subject, by the usual laws of interpretation; nor that we are not as certain that their statements, reasoning, and the great principles on which they proceed, necessarily involve this doctrine, as we are that many of their other representations are essentially inconsistent with it.

Nor is any such proof furnished by the fact, that Calvinists have not been aware that their theory involves the doctrine of physical depravity, and have even formally denied that any of their representations respecting regeneration, imply that the influence of the Spirit in that work, is inconsistent with the nature of the mind, incompatible with moral freedom, and subversive of our obligations. Such, undoubtedly, are and have been their views of their theory. They have persuaded themselves, that though perplexed with many difficulties, yet it is not justly open to these formidable objections. This, however, does not prove that it is not so; and the question at issue is, not whether they have believed their system to be correct or not, and vindicable from these exceptions, but whether the reasons on which

they rest that belief, or any others that can be alleged for its support, are valid, and form a fit justification of their doctrine. The reviewer himself admits, that while they claim that the Spirit's influence is not compulsory, nor "inconsistent with the nature of man as a rational and responsible creature," they still hold that it is "a direct and physical influence on the soul." The point, then, to be ascertained, in order to determine whether that influence is "perfectly congruous to the nature of the soul," or not, is the nature of the effect which they represent it as accomplishing. Is it employed in simply communicating truth to the mind, or modifying and determining the moral influence that acts on it? Such an agency might undoubtedly be direct and physical, and still be perfectly congruous to the nature of the soul "of man, as a rational and responsible creature," and is the agency, I cannot but believe which is in fact, exerted by the Holy Spirit. Such, however, are not their apprehensions. "They mean to assert, that regeneration is not effected by mere moral suasion; that there is something more than the simple presentation of truth, and urging of motives. The idea of Calvinists uniformly was, that the truth, however clearly presented or forcibly urged, would never produce its full effect without a special influence of the Holy Spirit;" and they not only held, the reviewer should have added, that it would never produce the "full effect" required, without such an influence, but would not produce any portion whatever, or degree of that effect, nor have any tendency to give existence to such a result; but, on the contrary, would necessarily prove an unmixed and triumphant temptation, and become the more intense and irresistible the farther its agency was carried. Their representations go to the length, as we have seen, of denying

even to the omniscient and omnipotent Spirit himself, the possibility of changing the heart through this instrumentality, on the ground that the "disposition of the mind whence volitions flow," on which these motives must waste their influence, is depraved, and from the necessity of its nature, can give birth only to sinful affections; that "moral means can only work upon such moral principles as they find to work upon," and "cannot produce a new nature, new principles of action, any more than natural means can make new life for themselves to work upon in a dead carcass." They accordingly regard the eradication of this "sinful disposition," and the implantation of an opposite relish for holiness, by which the moral means presented to the mind shall naturally and efficaciously excite right affections, as the work accomplished by the regenerating Spirit; and it is on this ground solely, that he is regarded as exerting a direct and physical agency.

"All the old Calvinists, and the great majority, we hope and believe, of the new school also, hold that the *result* of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul, is a holy principle or disposition. Dr. Cox says, if we understand him, that the result is a holy act. This is the whole ground of debate, and to lookers on it may appear rather too narrow to be worth disputing about. Dr. Cox, however, seems to think that this is a subject of vital importance, affecting deeply our views of the whole system of divine truth, and our manner of preaching; involving the high questions of the grounds of man's accountability, the nature of sin and holiness, and of human liberty. And here, we are sorry to say, we agree with him. We are afraid that this is a turning point; we do not see how it is possible to hold together the tattered shreds of Calvinism, if this ground be assumed.—p. 265, 266.

The whole discussion thus resolves itself into the ques-

tion, whether such a disposition, if introduced into the mind, would form an attribute of its physical nature, and thence whether a change of that nature would be involved in its implantation there. And such being, as I have shown, most indubitably the fact, the Calvinistic system is convicted of involving the doctrine of physical holiness and depravity, whether its teachers are aware of the fact, and willing to admit it, or not.

On the whole, then, I flatter myself it has become sufficiently apparent, that the reviewer has not been successful in attempting to vindicate the Calvinistic theory from this representation of its doctrines, nor in fastening the charge of unfairness or misapprehension on those who have exhibited these dogmas, which he so zealously disclaims, as among the most essential elements of that system; nor, with the exception of some absurd peculiarities in the Christian Spectator, already referred to—in advancing any adequate support of the grave imputations of error, with which he brands the views of those on these points, who dissent from the Calvinistic scheme. On the latter topic, he has not indeed, entered at large, but expected his readers, it would seem, to regard the justice of his charge, as an inevitable inference from the truth of his own theory.

Nor has he by any means adequately exhibited the difficulties with which the Calvinistic system on this subject is embarrassed. Had he, in fact, succeeded in demonstrating the position, on which he relies as the instrument of vindicating his system,—that there may be a "taste for spiritual loveliness," or sin, which "can be resolved neither into essential attributes, nor acts,"—it could scarcely have been regarded as an adequate defence of Calvinism, both because it leaves many of the most formidable difficulties of that

scheme unnoticed, and because it does not itself accord with the Calvinistic representations on the subject.

It is not a doctrine of Calvinism, that the original righteousness and natural depravity of human nature are not "a real existence, or entity." The theory of the reviewer is even more distantly removed, if possible, from that system, than the representation which he labours to overthrow, that holiness and sin are only predicable of acts, and not of attributes or physical substances. Calvinists regard the original rectitude of Adam as "a real existence," an absolute "entity." They teach that God created it, conferred it on Adam as an endowment, communicated it to him along with his nature, that it existed, began to act as a cause, and produced effects in him, the first moment of his being, and was such an integral and important part of his nature, that had he continued obedient, he would have conveyed it by generation, along with his other constitutional qualities, to his posterity. But what truth or imaginable significance can there be in these representations, if that original righteousness was after all, as the reviewer wishes us to believe, nothing more than an indescribable "something," that "can be resolved neither into an essential attribute, nor an act," and is neither "a real existence" nor an "entity." What species of existence can this undefinable and unimaginable "something," have been? Whatever else it may have been, it was not, we have his repeated assurance, "a real existence." It was neither the soul itself, nor any portion or attribute of it, nor any one or number of its acts or operations; nor was it any relation of parts to each other, as the mind has no parts, being indivisible and immaterial; nor was it any relation to it of any thing external to itself, of place or time, of cause or effect, of

beings or objects, for it was predicable of the soul itself, and of that only. But if it was thus neither the soul itself, nor any of its attributes or acts, neither any of its relations to other things, nor their relations to itself: if, in a word, it was neither any thing existing within it, nor any thing without it, it manifestly can have had no existence whatever. If it was not "a real existence," it must have been a non-existence; if it was not an actual "entity," it must have been a non-entity.

The disciples of the older Calvinists, however, will hardly be able to recognise, I suspect, any traces of their theory in this mere tissue of negatives, which thus effectually pushes their original righteousness and native depravity out of existence. It is immeasurably more at variance with their system of doctrines, than even the theory that resolves all sin into acts; and will impose, I suspect, a much heavier tax on the reviewer's powers, in order to its vindication, than the true Calvinistic theory required. If the original righteousness, with which Adam is represented to have been endowed, was thus an absolute non-existence, it would be satisfactory to be informed, with what meaning it is, that it is said to have been created; in what manner it is that an absolute non-existence is supposed to act as a positive cause, and produce virtuous volitions; in what sense it is, that it is believed to be in itself morally excellent, a conformity to law, and an object of divine approbation and reward; in what mode it was that Adam, had he persevered in obedience, would have conveyed this non-existence by propagation to his posterity, along with their nature; and by what process it was, that he became deprived of it at his fall. Did it cease to be a non-existence, by ceasing to exist? If the depraved disposition which succeeded in its place, is

also an absolute non-entity, it would be grateful to be informed, likewise, what it is that constitutes the specific differences of these two non-existences, and forms the ground of the fact, that one, by virtue of its nature, is holy and excellent in itself "in the highest sense", and the other in itself as odious and sinful; and that the one is an "energy of the mind" whence virtuous volitions flow, and which renders them virtuous by the necessity of its nature, and that the other by a similar necessity gives birth to sinful volitions, "like a blazing furnace, ceaselessly evolving flames and sparks, or a fountain pouring forth its waters without end."

Should the reviewer however succeed in disentangling his representations from these difficulties, he will not thereby have achieved a vindication of Calvinism; as the rectitude and depravity which that ascribes to the nature of man are not a nonentity, but real existences, and essential ingredients in his constitution and character. To furnish an adequate defence of the Calvinistic theory from the charge of involving the doctrine of physical depravity and regeneration, it will be essential to point out some legitimate principle on which the language in which that theory is customarily expressed, can be interpreted, so that the depravity which it ascribes to the mind, not only may not, but cannot with any fairness be regarded as a physical property; and to show with what other legitimate scheme the great fundamental principles on which its teachers proceed in their philosophy, and the great arguments on which they rely for its support, are naturally or even at all compatible.

It will be indispensable also to point out in what manner that depravity, if not a constitutional attribute, can be conveyed from one generation to another by propagation, how

it can constitute an "energy" of the mind and produce physical effects, in precisely the same manner as those attributes which are admitted to belong to the physical nature; and finally, how it can itself be the subject of a physical agency, and require, as is represented, an exertion of almighty power, like that which was put forth at the resurrection of Christ, to eradicate it from the constitution, and implant in its place a "taste for spiritual loveliness."

The achievement however of this formidable task is scarcely to be expected from human skill. It is a vexed and torturing mystery, that has baffled the understanding and perplexed the faith of the church at large for many ages, and whose difficulties none even of the myriads of the greatest, the wisest, and the best, who have attempted to explore its dark labyrinths, have hitherto found themselves able either to evade or overcome.

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

METHODS OF CONDUCTING

BENEVOLENT UNDERTAKINGS.

It is a general law of the divine administration, that the enterprises of men shall prove successful, in proportion to the wisdom with which they are conducted. This is not less the fact in affairs of religion—though often regarded as the peculiar field of divine sovereignty—than in merely secular undertakings, but is common to all departments of human agency. Wisdom in the execution of purposes, lies in the skilful selection and application of means for their accomplishment; and it is the adaptation undoubtedly of the means thus employed to produce the results which are sought through their agency, and the fact that they are formed by the Creator for the purpose of being instrumental to their attainment, that is the ground of the efficacy with which he customarily causes them to be attended. Success is accordingly the natural result of a skilful use of means, and not the effect of a special interposition of divine providence; and defeat is, on the other hand, the fit and necessary consequence of their unskilful application. It is God indeed in all instances who giveth the increase, to the planting of Paul and the watering of Apollos, as well as

to all humbler agencies, but he gives it in accordance with established laws, and conformed to the peculiarities of the agency which is the instrument of its production. Men never gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. To obtain those grateful fruits, they must plant their proper seeds in fitting soils, and at appropriate seasons. It doubtless sometimes happens that even wise attempts to do good are unsuccessful. Such was the fact indeed, and in many instances peculiarly, with the ministry of prophets, apostles, and the Saviour himself, and such is the fact likewise not unfrequently in merely secular affairs. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, even when their powers are dexterously employed, but these deviations from the general law of providence are not more frequent, and probably are of more seldom occurrence in the former, than in the latter class of effects.

In the accomplishment of the great moral ends for which the world is sustained, a most important office is assigned to human instrumentality. Each generation of men commences its career at the same point of total helplessness and ignorance, and has to acquire all the knowledge of which it becomes possessed, and by obedience or resistance to the favourable influences which reach it, to form for itself its character, and determine its destiny; and it pertains to each antecedent in the series, to transmit to its successor the wisdom which it has gained in the struggle, to point out to it the true path to happiness, and the dangers with which it is beset, and to sway it as far as possible to rectitude and deter it from guilt, by exerting over it for that end, all the propitious influences that lie within its power. And it is by the agency of men on each other almost entirely at every period of life, and through all the gradations of so-

ciety, that their character is formed, and their destiny shaped; that they are influenced to the choice of wise or of guilty pursuits; that they are led to combine their agency for the achievement of great and salutary, or pernicious objects; that they are allured to vice, or prompted to virtue. And it is in the exertion of a right influence of this kind, that the duty of life pre-eminently lies. It forms the appointed and illimitable field of human usefulness, in which by the gracious decree of providence, success is made to depend on the measure of the wisdom with which it is sought.

The results of new and important efforts for the advancement of religion, are modified still more than ordinarily, by the character of the measures adopted for the attainment of their object. Such undertakings usually, from their novelty, their uncertain success, their interference with established habits and collision with the interests and prejudices of men, encounter unforeseen and unexpected degrees and forms of opposition and difficulty; and neither good designs, ardent wishes, vigorous efforts, nor great sacrifices, alone, are by any means sufficient to ensure their success. The means for their attainment must be wisely chosen and skilfully applied. Error in their selection, or misjudgment in their use, may not only limit the amount of good attained, or involve a total failure; but may even throw affairs into a worse position than they occupied before, and call into activity and arm with lasting and resistless power, innumerable evils that had otherwise never obtained existence. How many unhappy verifications of this remark are furnished by the history of the church!

Seasons of great and novel enterprises in religion, are usually seasons of as great danger. The extraordinary causes which give birth to these enterprises themselves,

acting on communities at large, excite many other passions and purposes beside such as have the interests of religion for their object. Periods of improvement of any kind, are generally periods also of quackery. Attempts at and pretences to extraordinary discoveries and attainments become fashionable; the minds of men at large are roused to unusual action, and give birth to new and extraordinary forms of folly and error, as well as of wisdom and utility.

The present is undoubtedly an epoch of unusual importance to the churches of our country, from the great and numerous benevolent undertakings by which it is characterised, and is destined to exert a more momentous influence on future generations, than almost any that has preceded it, and one that shall depend, at least in an equal degree with others, on the character of the measures employed to attain the great objects sought.

It is a lesson incessantly taught both by history and experience, that to project, is not of course to secure the accomplishment of good; that it is possible that even the best undertakings may be defeated by negligence or mismanagement; and that nothing but the highest efforts of skill can ensure, even under the blessing of heaven, the full accomplishment of the good that is possible, nor secure our enterprises from giving existence to evils, which may greatly limit, and possibly far outweigh, the good effects of which they are the instruments.

The questions therefore,—what are the great principles on which these important enterprises should be conducted, and the means by which their objects are to be achieved, and what are the dangers of defeat or hindrance against which it is the part of wisdom to guard,—are of the most

essential moment, and demand the grave consideration of the friends of christianity and happiness.

The ultimate object of these benevolent institutions is, to promote piety to God and benevolence to man, or in other words, to bring those, toward whom their agency is directed, to act in accordance with the two great commandments of the gospel, requiring them to love God supremely, and each other as themselves. A proximate and auxiliary object of their agency is, to induce the community to contribute the pecuniary means, and lend the countenance and agency, which are necessary to the attainment of that ultimate end; and it is to this that the considerations on which I am about to dwell, will have their chief reference.

The first observation which I have to offer is, that it is apparent from the very nature of this object, that it is to be attained only by a moral influence.

It is to be accomplished by the diffusion of knowledge; by imparting right views and exciting a just sense of obligation; by winning the confidence, interesting the affections, and prompting resolution, by upright and manly persuasion. Without this knowledge indeed, it is physically impossible that these enterprises should become objects of even ordinary interest. Truth can exert its power over the mind, only as it is seen, and those themes alone obtain a commanding influence over the heart, which are clearly, frequently, and impressively urged on the attention; which obtain a firm hold of the convictions, and become intimately associated with the current of habitual thought.

Compulsion is, from the nature of the case, utterly incompetent to the attainment of the end, and incompatible with it. Men are not to be forced to the choice of virtue themselves, nor to the voluntary promotion of it in others.

Mere legislative enactments, prohibiting the transgression of the divine law, and enjoining the exercise of justice, truth, and benevolence, have no adaptation to secure those results. To lead men to love and obey God, they must be furnished with those views of him, by which others are excited to obey him. To prompt them to do justice and love mercy in their intercourse with each other, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world, they must be led to just apprehensions of those duties, and their obligations in respect to them. Such views are the proper and essential cause of these effects, without which their existence is as physically impossible, as the production of effects without any cause whatever. All that force can do is, to restrain and modify the external conduct; and its influence in that respect, when at variance with the predominant principles and passions, can go but a very limited length, and generally soon defeats itself by producing a reaction that carries public feeling and practice more distantly to the opposite extreme than before. None can be rendered efficient co-operators in these undertakings, except by inspiring them with the same views and sentiments, as characterise the enlightened, upright, and benevolent individuals who were led by the impulse of their fixed and legitimate principles to originate them, and have continued to sustain them hitherto by their countenance and agency.

I shall now turn to the notice of some of the dangers which beset these undertakings, and against which it becomes their friends and promoters cautiously to guard.

1. Of these, the first is that of projecting enterprises which are impracticable, or of doubtful utility, and of ad-

vancing such as are of subordinate importance, into the rank of those which are essential.

There are obviously objects enough that are entirely unexceptionable, to exhaust all the means, and give employment to all the agency that are likely to be offered for their advancement. To intrude among them such as are of doubtful expediency, were to pervert the bounty of the public, and give occasion for distrust in respect to such as are justly entitled to approbation and confidence. And to the various objects which have just claims to support, their proper rank should be assigned, according to their several degrees of importance. To ascribe to each in succession—no matter how subordinate its usefulness may be,—as its merits are presented to the public, the highest grade of utility and consequence, and to exhaust all the efforts to give it success which the most urgent can call forth, is as injudicious as it is unjust. It is adapted, by the air of extravagance which it throws over the subject, to excite distrust in respect to all such enterprises, and render them suspected as the offspring of inconsiderate and enthusiastic passion. There are fit and adequate reasons enough for sustaining all legitimate objects of public patronage, without overstating their merits, exaggerating their promise of usefulness, or resorting in any manner for their support to the aid of fiction or extravagance.

Of the various objects which have hitherto been urged on the patronage of the public, the most essential are unquestionably fully sanctioned by the gospel, and of the most obvious utility; and of several of them it were scarcely possible to overstate or adequately appreciate the importance. Such pre-eminently, are those which have for their object the distribution of the scriptures, and the com-

munication of the gospel to pagan nations, and to the destitute of christian lands. These sublime enterprises are in literal obedience to the command of the Saviour, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and have hitherto been attended by a most signal verification of the promise, "and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Of the others, there undoubtedly are several of very subordinate consequence, and probably some of but questionable expediency. To the latter class, the society instituted several years since for the conversion of the sons of Abraham, belongs, in the judgment of many, from the signal uselessness, thus far, of the liberal funds with which it was endowed, and the want of any promise of their more judicious appropriation hereafter.

II. No inducements should be employed to engage men to co-operate in these undertakings, except such as are derived from religious considerations.

No others are at all appropriate, or can prove efficacious. It is a desecration of these benevolent objects to resort to the pride, ambition, or vanity of men, for means for their accomplishment. It amounts to a tacit justification of those evil passions, tends to foster and confirm their predominance, and involves the false and derogatory assumption, that christianity is not fraught with inducements enough to enable us to accomplish our wise and virtuous designs through its instrumentality. No other motives than those of religion are at all adequate to these important objects. No great undertaking indeed, dependent for its achievement on combined and long continued efforts, can ever be successfully carried forward, except by the motives arising from itself. "Who

goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" Such is no less the fact with all such as have the advancement of the gospel and the salvation of souls for their object. Where are any fit or adequate motives to be found, for the gifts, the sacrifices, the sufferings, and all the strenuous and ceaseless efforts, which are requisite to the achievement of all that is aimed at and practicable in these stupendous enterprises, except in the dread and gracious truths of the gospel itself, and the illimitable retributions of that future being which it reveals to our knowledge? To rely for the accomplishment of such objects on mere casual impulses, or distant, dissimilar, and even hostile considerations, is to forget that effects are not to be brought into existence except by corresponding causes; to substitute weak and childish expectations, for skilful efforts; and to rush forward to the certainty of disgraceful defeat, in place of victory. No irrelevant or subordinate considerations can prove sufficient to sustain the difficulties which attend the execution of these great undertakings, nor can rationally be expected to meet the blessing of heaven. The efforts of selfishness are not accustomed to be accompanied by confidence in God, and reliance for success on his prospering care, and having nothing to sustain them but pride, vanity, or mere worldly hope, soon fall to the ground, and disappoint the passions they were meant to gratify.

Addresses to these passions indeed often directly defeat themselves, by exciting disgust in those to whom they are offered. They who have talent enough to acquire wealth, or who enjoy such a rank in society as to render their co-operation of importance, are generally intelligent enough to know, that to aggrandise themselves by splendid dona-

tions, which are to be blazoned before the world, and transmit their names to posterity, or by loud and forward professions of friendliness and zeal, is not a proper end to be sought in bequests to religious objects or efforts for their advancement. And when such inducements are employed, they not unfrequently, beside counteracting themselves, inspire distrust of the principles of those who offer them. It is a fair inference that the motives on which men rely to control the choices of others in cases like these, are such as have a predominating influence over themselves. If while professedly employed in the advancement of religion, they overlook its fit and infinite inducements, and rely on temptations to pride, ambition, or vanity to accomplish their object, they have no reason for complaint at the conclusion, that they are themselves under the control of those passions, and are false accordingly in their professions of zeal for the happiness of their fellow-men, and attachment to the cause of the Redeemer. One misjudged effort of this kind sometimes revives or excites prejudices against religion and its friends, which no subsequent care can eradicate, and exerts a lasting and fatal influence on whole families and communities. How much wiser to rely on the high and holy inducements which religion offers,—inducements whose all-controlling influence every mind may be made to feel, which were formed and adapted to maintain a supremacy in the heart, and produce affections and principles that are permanent and efficacious, and prove sources of immeasurable good to the individuals in whom they are excited, as well as to the cause in whose service they are engaged.

III. No institutions for these objects should ever be suffered to become, either openly or indirectly, the instruments of sectarianism.

Their proper and sole business is, the dissemination of the gospel, and so far as a particular explanation of its truths, or exhibition of its rites may ultimately become necessary to the attainment of that end, as must be the fact to a considerable degree in the labours, for example, of missionaries, they should be conducted on the broadest principles of impartiality. Such should be the fact especially in respect to all questions of mere external form, which the wisest of all sects unite in regarding as of very subordinate importance, in comparison with the great facts and doctrines of the gospel. In respect to these and all other points, the sectarian should ever be wholly lost in the christian;—the messenger of particular denominations in the ambassador of Christ.

It is as much at variance with sound policy, as with the disinterested spirit of the gospel, to give to these institutions an air of proselytism. The public will not in fact sustain undertakings of that kind. Their support must, from the nature of the case, be derived chiefly from the denominations whose peculiarities it is their object to propagate. They involve in their very nature a sort of excommunication of other sects, or sentence of exclusion and declaration of hostility against them, and of course cause them to withhold their co-operation. Their first effect thus is greatly to limit their means and possibility of usefulness. But they generally find as little encouragement from the best and most efficient of those denominations, whose interests they are designed to subserve, as from those which it is their object to supersede. The better class among the sects which are able and disposed to contribute largely to benevolent objects, feel but little sympathy comparatively with mere appeals to their sectarianism. Such individuals

are not easily to be seduced into so gross an error, as to imagine it to be more important to convert men to presbyterianism, episcopalianism, or any other sectarian peculiarity, than to win them into the ranks of Christ's disciples. How meagre and wretched indeed are such appeals, depending chiefly for their success on party passion, contrasted with those which are derived from the great truths of the gospel, in which all have a common, an equal, and an infinite interest. Such undertakings accordingly—deserted by those who are the most efficient supporters of benevolent objects —soon flag and fall to the ground, or only prolong a heavy and ineffective existence. Of their tendency to such results, several conspicuous examples have already occurred in the progress of these efforts in our country. Of the liberal contributions for example, of the Episcopal denomination for the gratuitous distribution of the scriptures, a far greater portion undoubtedly is devoted to the object through the American Bible Society, which has nothing sectarian in its character or object, than that which is offered through the society formed solely of the members of that communion. The offerings in like manner of Presbyterians to the American Home Missionary Society, which has for its object—not at all to disseminate presbyterianism —but simply to carry the gospel to the destitute parts of our country, greatly exceed those which the most strenuous efforts have been able to attract into the sectarian treasury of the Presbyterian Missionary Society; and the reason is, that those who are disposed to contribute to the great work of diffusing the gospel, have as a general fact, far more sympathy with christianity, than sectarianism, and their hearts consequently instinctively and joyfully respond to appeals founded on the great principles of the gospel, while

they are repulsed by those which are addressed even in a subordinate degree to mere denominational attachments. The result will undoubtedly accordingly be, that the latter will dwindle and drag on but a feeble existence, while the former will continue to expand its operations and usefulness, become more firmly established in public confidence, and attract to itself the ardent interest and generous patronage of the wise and beneficent of all classes.

It is, happily, one of the most signal characteristics of the age, that the church at large is disposed to lay aside, as of subordinate significance, its denominational peculiarities, and to unite in the great and sole work of disseminating the religion of Christ. The greater number of its recent benevolent institutions, accordingly, formed on that evangelical plan, embrace among their directors and patrons the enlightened and benevolent of all sects. It is a scarcely less striking and propitious fact, that several undertakings, put forth under the special charge of particular denominations, have, in the severe struggles to which they have been called, soon lost most of their party characteristics, and assumed the aspect solely of propagators of the gospel. Such is eminently the fact with the great missionary enterprises to the East, to any or all of which, such is the predominance of their christian character, scarce any denomination would feel reluctant, from any of their peculiarities, to contribute for their advancement.

IV. Another evil to be most scrupulously avoided, is that of the connexion with these objects of any secular enterprises, which interfere with the occupations and interests of others.

To entangle and embarrass them with such undertakings

is unwise, if for no other reason, that even if successful, they can contribute nothing to the advancement of religion. They have no natural connexion with the accomplishment of this object, nor adaptation to secure it, any more than the ordinary employments of men, which do not profess to be put forth under the special sanctions of the gospel, nor to have its advancement for their sole object. But that is not the worst objection against them: they desecrate religion, by converting it into a mere worldly speculation, and connecting its dignity and truth, in the eyes of many, with the success of these enterprises. In place of prompting to obedience, they naturally and necessarily prove fruitful sources of temptation. By their collision with the interests of men in their callings that are lawful, and on which they are dependent for their livelihood, they excite prejudice, dislike, and opposition, fill the breast with evil passions, exhaust the whole interest of the mind in worldly occupations, and finally render religion and its friends objects of suspicion, and often of open and rancorous hostility.

We have a signal example of this folly in the crusades, professedly undertaken for the conversion of infidels, and put forth at the instance of the professed disciples of Christ, and under the awful sanction of his religion; but which were in truth mere conquering expeditions, that, had they fully succeeded in their secular objects, could have done nothing for christianity, more than any other conquest for which the sanction of religion had not been claimed. The actors themselves in those tragic scenes, exhibited every thing but religion in the conduct of their enterprises—worse manners and morals even than those whom it was their professed object to convert; and all the moral influence which they exerted on them, like that of similar contests, spent

itself in the excitement of all the evil passions of which the human breast is susceptible, and the confirmation and increase of their hostility to christianity.

Another example of the evil of such undertakings, is seen in the famous enterprise of the ship Duff, in which religion and merchandise were forced into a species of co-partnership, and the advancement of the former made to depend on the success of the last. The baubles which were to allure the natives of the Friendly Islands from idleness, vice, and idolatry, only proved temptations to violence, theft, and murder; and converted those peaceful abodes into scenes of devastation and bloodshed, in place of the security and happiness which are the appropriate fruits of religion.

Unhappily, a scarcely less signal illustration of the injudiciousness of such undertakings, has been recently furnished nearer home, in the attempted connexion of the establishment of stages, to run on week days, with the efforts to promote a better observance of the sabbath; an enterprise, the bare statement of which cannot be made, without exposing its enormous folly. The object of the institution for promoting the observance of the sabbath, is to persuade those who are addicted to its violation, to abstain from their worldly occupations during its sacred hours, and devote themselves to the service of God. The proper and only way, accordingly, to accomplish that end is, to change their views of the institution and obligation of the day. While their principles and passions remain the same, no reformation can be expected in their practice. Now what imaginable adaptation to bring about this change, can the establishment for the purpose have had, of an additional line of stages, to run on week days from Albany to Buffalo? The scheme carries on its face the obvious marks

of a childish farce. Can such an enterprise have offered any likelihood or possibility of changing the views and reforming the principles of the community, of conveying to them a better knowledge of the divine institution of the Lord's day, and their obligations to observe it; of convincing them of the guilt of its profanation, and finally of persuading them to honor God, by devoting themselves to his service during its consecrated hours, as his word requires? The pretence is an affront to religion and to common sense. It might as well have been offered as a remedy for the general prevalence of ignorance, intemperance, or infidelity.

Had we listened, however, to the confident statements and lofty promises of the originator of this undertaking, we should have been led to expect that nothing but its trial could be required, entirely to secure the great object sought. These stages were to be the very chariots of Aminadab, that should flash instant conviction from their lightning wheels, and thunder dismay on all the enemies of the sabbath. To doubt of their triumphant success, was to be guilty of presumptuous unbelief; to oppose or discountenance their establishment, was to join in league with the open enemies of the sabbath.

But this measure not only had no adaptation radically to correct the evil, by removing the ignorance, erroneous views, or wrong principles, which are its cause; but offered no essential promise of even incidental good. That such multitudes travel on the sabbath, is not, as a general fact, the result at all of necessity, but of mere choice. Those, for example, who had travelled from Albany to Buffalo on the Lord's day, antecedently to the projection of this enterprise, cannot, at least to any great extent, have been forced

to that measure by the want of sufficient conveyances on week days. They travelled on that day simply because they preferred it. No important ground, therefore, of that kind, existed for the establishment of an additional line of stages. Had a larger number of conveyances been obviously necessary, and promised a profit, those who were already embarked in the business would doubtless have been regardful enough of their interest, to have furnished them. As travellers, then, were not primarily and necessarily prompted to the profanation of the sabbath, by the want of adequate conveyances on other days of the week, their mere multiplication plainly can neither have promised a radical cure, nor any extensive mitigation of the evil. Contemplated in its most favourable aspect, therefore, the enterprise manifestly from its nature, cannot have had any adaptation essentially to promote a better observance of the sabbath, nor can ever have been imagined to have had, by any who gave it a thorough consideration.

It must have been, therefore, to its projector, a mere attempt by opposition, to force the owners of conveyances on the route, to stop their stages on the Lord's day, and thereby compel the public to travel only on the other days of the week; or else a deliberate effort to deprive those individuals of the power of contributing to the profanation of the sabbath, by stripping them, by reckless competition, of their property, and involving them in ruin!

This attempt at coercion, as a matter of course, proved totally unsuccessful, and became the instrument of multiplying to a most frightful extent, the evils which it was its professed object to remedy. It sunk down at once into a mere common contest for patronage between rival and opposition lines of stages, with this difference only, that one sacrile-

giously claimed for its object and all the measures which were employed for its attainment, the special sanction of christianity. All its influence accordingly went to desecrate religion, and defeat the object at which it professed to aim. It was naturally regarded by those on whose occupations it thus intruded, not only as an uncourteous and unfair interference, but as a deliberate and malignant blow at their very means of subsistence; and consequently in place of inspiring them with respect for religion, and alluring them to its service, aroused within them an eager and restless concern for their worldly interests, wrought up their selfishness, anger, and hostility to intensity, and threw over their cause and all their efforts for its support, an air of justifiableness as the necessary measures of self-defence. They were thus fortified with the feeling that they were resisting an unrighteous assault on their interests, and became armed with resolution obstinately to maintain the struggle, until it should issue in their triumph. A scene of fierce and bitter strife and contention of course ensued, in which each party, to gain the greater share of patronage, resorted to all the violence, recrimination, and low and dishonourable arts, which are the usual accompaniments of such struggles. Each endeavoured to enlist in its favour the interests of its friends and the passions of the community; and those who had been accustomed to violate the sabbath, were prompted by their sympathy with the one, and indignation at the other, openly to enlist themselves in the strife, and unite their influence against the sabbath itself, as well as its pretended vindicators and friends. By this means multitudes were led to its wanton profanation out of mere dislike to these coercive measures, and spite at their authors and abettors, who otherwise would never have been seduced into its violation;

multitudes became lastingly prejudiced against all organized societies for the purpose of swaying public opinion, or influencing public morals, as dangerous interferences with the rights of the community; and the quick associations of multitudes of others with that sacred day, whose consciences were before on the side of good order and the institutions of religion, became sickened with disgust and corroded with aversion. It thus resulted that not a solitary individual was reformed by these measures, and that their only effect was to prejudice, alarm, and provoke the community, to excite the enemies of religion to open, combined, and determined opposition to the gospel, and to give to vice and irreligion on every hand an intense and lasting impulse.

How different would have been the result, if in place of thus addressing to the community these fierce and overpowering temptations to oppose religion, an equal amount of means and agency had been employed in communicating the knowledge, and bringing the motives of the gospel to bear on their understandings and consciences, by dignified and affectionate appeals;—had the proper moral influence, in short, without an intermixture of temptation, been employed to accomplish the work? What a mass of useful knowledge might have been imparted? What a heightened sense of obligation produced; and what a deep and efficacious conviction of the guilt and folly of the profanation of the sabbath? How many might have been won from the ranks of its violators; how many encouraged and confirmed in its observance, and all their associations with it rendered of a grateful and friendly character, unsoured by injury or prejudice, and unwarped by selfishness or exasperated passion? A foundation might have been laid in the increased knowledge and rectified principles of the public, for a bet-

ter observance of the day and support of its institutions, which should have proved enduring, and transmitted a rich legacy of blessings to many generations.

That such has proved to be the issue of this ill-advised enterprise, is not to be regarded as singular, or the result of any peculiar causes. It is what may be always expected from such undertakings. There is not a benevolent institution in the land, that such a course of mismanagement would not have totally defeated, and converted into an instrument of immeasurable mischief. What better effect could have been expected, for example, had such a species of measures been adopted for the purpose of restraining the evils of intemperance; had the projectors and agents of that enterprise, in place of relying on the influence of the fit and powerful persuasions which the subject itself naturally furnishes, undertaken to accomplish their object by coercion? by refusing to deal or associate with those who drink, manufacture, or vend the materials of intemperance; to import or export goods in ships that convey liquors, or belong to those who are traffickers in them? Would not such a measure have infallibly defeated the undertaking, by unnecessarily and foolishly arraying the interests and passions of the community against it, and inducing an immediate and relentless combination of those who were thus assailed, in opposition to the enterprise? What could have been more unwise than for the friends of temperance—imitating the example on which I have been animadverting,—to have entered into a war of competition with principals and accessories in the importation of liquors, by constructing new lines of ships for the conveyance of goods to and from foreign markets; and to have attempted to throw over their undertaking the sanctity of a religious enterprise,

and denounced all who disapproved or opposed it, as the open enemies of religion? Who does not see that it would inevitably have proved the occasion, by creating twice the necessary quantity of conveyances for those branches of commerce, of giving birth to bitter and perpetual strife for patronage; of dividing the whole community into parties, and enlisting their passions in a fierce and relentless contest; and ultimately of involving each in immense pecuniary loss; that instead of removing the causes, or arresting the progress of intemperance, it would have led many out of mere spite and delight in offering offence to their antagonists, to indulge in excess; and prompted the intemperate of all classes to combine their efforts for the formal support of their cause and propagation of their principles; and finally, that its only influence on religion would have been, to degrade and profane it, and embitter to multitudes of minds, all their associations with it, by prejudice and a sense of injury? Had that society taken such a course, it is not too much to say, that they not only would not have reformed a single drunkard, nor gained a solitary advantage over public feeling and habit, but would have added a tenfold intensity and permanence to the evil, by rendering itself the object of contempt and hatred, and prompting the public to open and organized opposition.

Instead however of pursuing such a course, the friends of that cause have relied on a moral influence to attain their object. They have aimed a blow at the root of the evil, by endeavouring to change the principles and feelings of the public in respect to intemperance; by communicating knowledge, enforcing obligation, and engaging the judgment, the conscience, and all the sympathetic feelings of the community in their favour. They have proceeded in short

on the principles of common sense, and treated men as rational beings, in place of brutes; and have accordingly succeeded in reclaiming multitudes who had become deeply involved in the vice, and in arresting still greater numbers in their incipient steps toward its fatal vortex, and have laid in the knowledge which they have diffused, in the principles which they have called into activity, and in the sentiments which they have excited, a foundation for a wide and continued influence throughout many generations.

V. Another injudicious expedient sometimes resorted to to procure the observance of religious duties, is that of legislative enactments enforced by fines and penalties.

Measures of this kind are obnoxious to essentially the same objections, as that on which I have been animadverting. They have no adaptation to the end for which they are employed. They do not enlighten the public mind, transmute the opinions of the community into a coincidence with their injunctions, nor establish virtuous principles. They leave the ground of the evils which it is their object to counteract, entirely untouched, and merely attempt violently to restrain one of their modes of operation. They are accordingly unsuccessful in countries like this, in all instances where they are not sustained by a coincidence with the principles of a large majority of the community. By others, they are as a matter of course regarded—whether right or wrong makes no difference as to the result—as unlawful attempts to coerce their faith and practice, are branded with the odious names of priestcraft, intolerance and oppression, and consequently awaken prejudice and hostility, and form them into open and organized opposition.

Legislatures are undoubtedly competent to enact laws

prohibiting profaneness, intemperance, the violation of the sabbath, and every other form of vice; and are no more guilty by it of an infringement of the rights of conscience, than they are in prohibiting perjury, theft, or any other gross transgression of the divine law that is inconsistent with public happiness. It is not the business indeed of legislatures to control the conscience, nor is that at all the object or effect of such enactments. But it is their business to establish all such laws as the general happiness requires, and it is entirely on that ground that those laws rest, which enjoin the exercise of virtue, and prohibit vice. The proper method however of accomplishing this end is, not ordinarily that of mere bold enactments, enforced by no other motives than those of fines and penalties; but that of diffusing knowledge, by which the public shall be led to the adoption of correct views, and prompted through that medium to the choice of virtue. These naked enactments, when no corresponding sentiment exists in the community, are not adapted to secure, but to defeat their object. The only instance in which they can prove expedient is, where the great majority of the community being favourable to them, they are merely employed for the purpose of restraining a scattering few who are exhibiting an example that may prove the means of propagating vice, and who from their rareness and offensiveness to the public at large, may be thus easily and effectually restrained.

Of the utter uselessness in general of these legislative attempts to promote religious observances, history furnishes a lamentable multitude of examples. A sufficiently convincing illustration of the inexpediency of attempting to use their instrumentality, has arisen under our own observation, in the endeavours of the last two years to procure

a repeal of the law of congress respecting the transportation of the mail on the sabbath. This appeal to the government, was perhaps open to as few exceptions, and sustained by as many recommendatory considerations, as any that could have been selected. Its object was not, as was erroneously suspected and represented, to impose laws on the consciences of individuals, nor to offer any interference whatever with their principles or inclinations in respect to the observance of the sabbath; but simply to obtain the abrogation of the law which now legalizes its violation, by requiring the conveyance of the mail and the distribution of letters on that day, thereby devolving on the agents and officers of government, a task, in many instances extremely ungrateful to themselves, presenting necessarily to multitudes in the community, strong temptations to yield during its sacred hours, a partial attention to their secular business, and exhibiting to the public at large a pernicious example. All that was solicited of the government was, that it should testify, by the repeal of this law, the same respect to the day, that it exhibits in the other departments of its administration, in none of which is a public attention ever given to business on the sabbath. And to this appeal its originators were obviously prompted solely by their conviction of the divine institution of the day, of the propitious influence of its general observance on the public character and happiness, and of the injury to morals and danger to the stability of our useful institutions, with which its prostration in public respect must be fraught. In their views moreover of the important benefits that arise from its sanctification, they enjoyed the sanction not only of the religious community as a body, but of large numbers of the enlightened and patriotic of all classes who are

interested in the preservation of the national character and welfare, and sensible of the impracticability of perpetuating our free institutions without the aid of public virtue. The sentiment is common indeed to all whose knowledge and observation enable them to form a competent judgment on the subject, that a general corruption of morals, must involve an inevitable and speedy prostration of public liberty security and happiness. Few individuals of the least consideration can be found so ignorant as not to know, or so reckless as not to allow, that public happiness cannot possibly subsist without the support of public morality, and that morals have their chief foundation and efficiency in religion. National profligacy and vice are synonymous with the general prevalence of selfish and unbridled passion, of falsehood and injustice, treachery and violence, and their inseparable attendants, insecurity, misery, and bloodshed. But the state of public morals may generally be very safely measured by the respect with which the sabbath is regarded. As they owe their origin and maintenance chiefly to the sanctions of the gospel, wherever these meet with a respectful recognition, the sabbath will as a matter of course receive a general regard, as a divine institution, and its salutary influence be felt on the principles and manners of the community, by the knowledge which the public worship and instruction to which it is devoted, are the appointed means of disseminating.

The object at which the authors of this measure aimed, was thus not only singularly unexceptionable, but eminently entitled to commendation, honourable to their reverence of God, and their love of country; and could it have been appropriately attained, would have proved fruitful of benefits to the public, and furnished distinguished occasion for congra-

tulation to all the friends of happiness and religion. A spectacle more sublime can scarcely be conceived, than that of a nation like this, offering a voluntary expression of its homage to the Creator, by suspending its worldly cares on the day which he has consecrated to himself, and reverently devoting its hours to his service; nor one that, together with the just principles and enlightened piety that would every where be found to be its attendants, could furnish juster ground for the expectation of peculiar manifestations of his care.

The authors of this measure however, notwithstanding this obvious propriety of the object at which they aimed, and the concurrence of so many propitious circumstances in their favour, missed of their end by misjudging of the means of its attainment; by addressing their appeal to the government before they directed their efforts to the people. They overlooked the great fact that the proper way to reform evils of the kind is, to produce a change of public opinion and feeling in regard to them; to impart to the community just views of their duty, and persuade them to adopt and act on them;—not by bare force to restrain their mere outward exhibition, while the principles and passions in which they have their origin, are left untouched.

Its results are accordingly a total failure in the object, and the excitement of a violent and organized opposition, which has placed the subject in a far more embarrassed condition than before, and raised in the prejudices and passions of the ill-affected, a host of formidable obstacles to future success. And this is certainly what was to have been expected, and what would have been the result in any analogous case. Had the friends of temperance, for example, sought legislative enactments to aid their work, con-

stituting drunkenness a capital offence, punishing it with the loss of the elective franchise, or heavy fines, or branding it with any other mark of dishonour, they would have taken the surest course to defeat their whole object. All drunkards and drinkers would of course have regarded it as a flagrant encroachment on their liberties, would at once have assumed an attitude of self-defence and hostility, and combined their efforts to put down the society and its agents, as the enemies of private rights and public enjoyment.

That this application for legislative interference, for the purpose of preventing the violation and promoting the observance of the sabbath, has failed, is probably just matter of congratulation, rather than regret, to the friends of religion, and may be regarded as a propitious indication of Providence in its favour. Had the attempt obtained success, in the end it would almost certainly have proved more calamitous a thousand fold, than its defeat. The passage of a law at the late session of Congress, would not have insured its permanence, but would undoubtedly have given birth immediately to extensive combinations and strenuous efforts, to procure its repeal at the next meeting of the national legislature; the whole country would have become parties to the contest, and a fierce excitement of passion, and an open contempt and wanton violation of the day by multitudes, would have been the consequence. A prolongation of the struggle through successive years, would almost inevitably terminate in a fatal prostration of the day and its institutions in the public estimation, and in the exulting and general triumph of open irreligion.

The occurrence of this unhappy error will be the less to be regretted, should it prove the means of deterring the

friends of religion hereafter, from attempts to gain their objects by similar measures.

VI. A wise regard to the dignity and prosperity of these benevolent societies, will lead their managers to restrict themselves, as far as possible, in the selection of agents, to men of distinguished competence.

It is a task of no ordinary arduousness and delicacy, successfully to present to the public the claims of these various objects, to convey just views of their nature, practicability, and the means by which they are to be advanced, and to awaken toward them an appropriate and permanent interest. It is not the labours of every individual whose intentions are unexceptionable, or whose zeal is ardent, that are adapted to achieve this result. If possessed of no other qualifications than those, if offensive in their manners, inexperienced in the views and prejudices of men, dictatorial in their claims or petulant in their rebukes, without the recommendation of learning, or the attractions of a dignified address, they can scarcely fail to defeat the object at which they aim. Wisdom will undoubtedly lead, therefore, as a general rule, to the employment of those only who are capable of doing justice to the subjects for which they seek the patronage of the public; who at least are not distinguished for weakness or dogmatism; but who comprehend the nature and importance of the objects which they undertake to advance, are competent to give to them dignity and weight, and make deep and fit impressions respecting them on the public mind. To intrust their defence and support to unskilful hands, were unnecessarily to incur the danger of rendering them objects of indifference and disgust to the public, in place of interest and respect.

VII. It is still more essential to the wellbeing of these institutions, that they continue to be scrupulously guarded against the contaminating touch of men of disreputable characters.

Individuals are at every period to be found, who having by dishonorable lives forfeited their claim to general confidence and respect, are willing to throw a false light over their evil deeds, and repair their reputation, by publicly associating themselves with objects which give credit and influence in the community. But it were an unpardonable degradation of these pure and dignified objects, to suffer them to fall into the hands of such beings, to be made the ostentatious instruments of veiling the dark features of their deformity, and aggrandizing their pride and ambition. Their patronage is never worth possessing, and must prove a fatal blight, if purchased at the price of lending a sanction to their lives, or degrading the associations to which they contribute, to a level with themselves. These institutions can have no right, indeed, to ask or expect public patronage, any longer than they continue to be conducted, as heretofore, by men of known integrity, disinterestedness, and public spirit, in whose capacity the community can justly repose their confidence, and to whose fidelity they can safely entrust their charities. The audacious hands of others, who may wish merely to transfer its lustre to themselves, or to hide their dishonor beneath its glory, must continue to be unceremoniously thrust at a distance from the ark of these enterprises, in order that their existence may be perpetuated, and their usefulness sustained.

VIII. They should continue to be guarded with equal vigilance against the machinations of the ambitious, who

may attempt to make them the instruments of selfish aggrandizement.

This is perhaps an imaginary, rather than a real danger. The sacred character of these objects, is happily adapted to keep aloof the open aspirants after worldly distinction; too severely rebuking their selfishness, imposing too strong a restraint on their passions, and requiring too rigid and painful a disguise of the secret sentiments by which they are actuated. It allows scarcely a larger scope to the vainglorious, among those to whom the advancement of religion is the professed business of life. The stations in these societies that can impart any important influence, or confer distinction, require qualifications essentially incompatible with the selfishness and vanity that would attempt to make them the instruments of their gratification;—a conscientious aim at the glory of God in place of human applause, a love of souls instead of self, a superiority to worldly flatteries and frowns, in place of a spirit of sycophancy, or subservience to popular opinion. The various bodies, accordingly, to which their direction has hitherto been intrusted, have been eminently distinguished for the upright and disinterested spirit which these objects require, and have merited and enjoyed the unlimited confidence both of the friends and patrons of these several institutions themselves, and of the intelligent and respectable at large of all classes. If it has at any time happened, that persons of a different aim have been thrust within their circle, they have themselves soon discovered the uncongeniality of the element into which they were intruded for the pursuit of ends like theirs, and revealed to those around them the egregious error of calling to the arduous task of conducting the lofty enterprises of public benevolence, individuals whose scanty virtues are

insufficient to render them unexceptionable in their private stations.

To permit these objects to fall into the hands of men who are capable of making them the tools of their personal aggrandizement, were fatal alike to their dignity and usefulness. Religion is not the proper field for the gratifications at which persons of that character aim. If they desire the indulgence of their aspiring passions, let them repair to the camp, or mingle in the strife of politics, the legitimate scenes of ambition, selfishness and intrigue, where they may meet with congenial spirits, and obtain their merited reward.

IX. A more numerous class of persons whose influence, if uncounteracted, might prove hurtful to these institutions, is that of the injudiciously zealous, who substitute passion in place of knowledge, as the instrument of swaying their fellow men.

Individuals are at all periods to be seen, who are characterised by indiscreet ardour and misplaced enterprise; and of late years more than an ordinary share seems to have sprung up in some sections of the church. The young, unlearned, and inexperienced, have been seen venturing to assume the rights and offices of teachers, and struggling to advance themselves forward into the rank of guides; and impatient of the usual method of controlling men by a moral influence, of the slow process of persuasion by the communication of knowledge, they have chosen to rely on cant and clamour, and in many instances on vulgar and profane abuse, as a cheaper and less complicated means of giving an impulse to religion, and multiplying its converts. They have resorted, indeed, to the novel and thorny instrumen-

tality of impudence, brow-beating, and violence, to restrain men from sin, and prompt them to obedience. The great principle on which they seem to proceed, is that of offering provocation alike to the better sensibilities and worst passions of the human breast,—of plunging men into temptation, instead of delivering them from it,—an extraordinary method, certainly, of gaining for religion a supremacy in the heart; it being precisely that which is employed by the great adversary of souls for the opposite purpose of accomplishing their destruction. It unhappily has not produced any better results in the hands even of ministers of religion, some of whom, to their deep disgrace, have adopted it, in place of following the dictates of common sense, and the example and direction of the Son of God. It has devastated the church, degraded religion, and proved the means of filling the minds of multitudes with prejudice and disgust, in place of alluring them to revere and obey the gospel.

These ardent individuals, however, almost as a matter of course, advance themselves into notice and influence, overbearing by their forwardness the modest and retiring, and outstripping the discreet, who pause to reflect before acting, and follow the guidance of reason, instead of the impulses of passion. But they are undesirable auxiliaries, in undertakings in which wisdom, fortitude, and perseverance are requisite, and the friends of these great enterprises should cautiously guard against their intrusion into positions, where their indiscretions may throw discredit on these objects, or multiply the obstacles to their success. The great work of advancing sacred knowledge, reforming the principles of men, and turning them into the paths of righteousness and peace, is not to be accomplished nor aided by the temptations of dogmatism, denunciation, and abuse, nor

any other violent measure, adapted only to provoke indignation or excite disgust. Men are to be instructed only by the communication of truth; to be usefully convinced by sound evidence and clear reasoning, and effectually won by appeals that are fraught with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. And for the accomplishment of all these great ends, happily ample means exist in the infinite storehouse of the gospel; truths to enlighten and convict, to elevate, excite and impress, and motives exhaustless and all-powerful, that are adapted to reach and control every sensibility of our nature.

X. The last consideration on which I shall dwell, and which is applicable to the friends and supporters at large of these benevolent objects, as well as to those who are intrusted with their immediate management, is the necessity of caution against a forgetfulness of their dependence on the blessing of the Most High for success, and the importance of cherishing an habitual reliance on his care.

It is a deep and fixed sense of his universal control and their dependence, and an habitual trust in him alone, that can insure the success of even a wise use for these objects of the means of his appointment. These are the views and feelings which fit them to receive and appreciate his blessing, and it is to these that his promises are addressed.

With these views and affections, the friends of these great interests will meet the approval of God in all their obedient designs, and his prospering care will secure from defeat all their wise and benevolent undertakings in his cause. The most decisive indications of their continued prosperity, abound, indeed, on every hand, to cheer and excite them onward. Most of the great enterprises in which

they are engaged, have long since ceased to be experiments. The practicability of the objects at which they aim, has been ascertained by success, great and decisive beyond the most sanguine expectations which they had ventured to indulge. And several of them have received a signal sanction and powerful impulse from the extraordinary interpositions of Divine Providence in their favour. They have accordingly become firmly established in the approbation and confidence, and embrace among their active promoters most, of the greatest and best in the land. Whoever looks over the long catalogue of their officers and benefactors, will find comparatively few names wanting that could contribute essentially to their dignity. We see age lending its experience to their counsels, and learning offering the tribute of her wisdom and eloquence, wealth and enterprise pouring their abundance into their treasury, and cheerful toil and economy presenting their humbler offerings. On all the peopled hills and beautiful vales of our land, hearts are found that feel the liveliest sympathy with these great objects, contemplate their progress with intense interest, and rejoice to contribute of their means for their advancement, and to invoke on them the blessing of heaven. And the incidents to which their progress naturally gives birth, are adapted to sustain and increase this interest. Even the calamitous events with which some of them have been visited, have contributed almost more than their success, to attract to them the ardent regard of the public. The heroic sufferings in distant and barbarous lands of their missionaries, their magnanimity patience and fidelity to their Master's cause, the early and rapid intrusions of death within their circle, the eloquent appeals from their dying lips that have come back to their native shores, and the touching memo-

rials of their piety and zeal which the hand of their associates or friends has reared, have made them objects of deeper and juster interest to all who revere what is great, or love what is good, than any others that have offered themselves to the sympathy and admiration of the world.

Thus firmly established in the general confidence, and giving birth daily to new proofs of their usefulness, and new incidents adapted to sustain and strengthen their hold on the public interest, they will under a wise and skilful direction, and the accustomed blessing of heaven, continue to go on in their career of usefulness and success, with perpetually accumulating power and accelerating rapidity, until they shall at length have fully accomplished all the great objects at which they aim.

REV. E. R. TYLER'S SERMON

ON THE

PREFERABLENESS OF HOLINESS TO SIN.

THE unhappy intermixture of error, which this discourse exhibits, with many obvious and important truths, fits it to be an instrument of evil as well as good, and entitles it to public animadversion. I am prompted to solicit attention to it by the consideration also, that a noticeable resemblance of some of its phraseology arguments and doctrines to those which characterize the tracts on its subject, which were offered by myself to the public several years since, may possibly betray its readers into the impression, that its erroneous representations, as well as those which are just, are in accordance with the views which I then advanced, and their natural results,—a conclusion at obvious variance with truth, as the observations I am about to offer, will render sufficiently apparent.

I shall not pause to construct a refutation of all the exceptionable statements that may be detected on its pages, nor offer a commendation of every sentiment that may deserve approval, but shall restrict myself to the notice of the

most essential of its errors on the one hand, and of such of its truths on the other, as are of chief importance in the discussion.

The object of the discourse is primarily to determine what the desires are of the Most High, in respect to the actions of men, and the reasons of the admission of sin into the universe. To a useful or intelligible discussion of either of these topics, it is obviously essential that a clear apprehension be carried in the mind, of the distinction between the events of his own agency, and those of the agency of men, as objects of his desire. All the events with which this discussion is concerned, are the effects either of his own efficiency, or of the efficiency of men. In regard to those to which he himself gives existence directly, such as the creation of worlds and beings, and the acts of his moral and providential administration, no room is left for question whether he desires or chooses they should exist, as the fact that he gives them being, proves his choice of their existence. The only question open for discussion in regard to them, respects the ground or reason of that choice.

In regard however to the events to which men give existence, there is room both for the inquiry whether he desires that they should exist,—whether they are objects of direct and absolute preference to others in their place; and for question also in regard to the reason of his permitting them to be such as they are, if he desires the exertion of a different series in their stead. There are thus throughout this wide field, but two topics of legitimate inquiry. What are the desires of the Most High in respect to the voluntary conduct of mankind in the condition in which he places them? Does he desire the exertion by them of precisely that series of actions to which they in fact

give existence, or in all instances prefer obedience from them in place of sin? And what are the reasons of his pursuing a course of agency toward them by which they are permitted to exert their present series of sinful actions, instead of efficaciously influencing them to exert obedient ones in their place?

In respect to the first of these questions, the views that men have adopted, have depended on the relation which in their estimation, the events of human agency sustain to the agency of God. Those who, like Emmons and West, represent God as their efficient cause, and exhibit men as virtually their mere passive subjects, of course regard God as desiring their existence in preference to other actions in their stead. They consider the fact that they are brought into being, to be as decisive proof that he prefers their existence in place of others, as his having called into being the worlds and creatures that constitute the universe, is that he desires their existence. And it is clearly a necessary inference from their doctrine respecting divine efficiency. Thus Emmons, with the daring that forms the chief peculiarity of his theological speculations, affirms that "if God meant to display all his goodness in creation, he was obliged to bring objects into being, upon whom he might display both his justice and his mercy." That "the glory of God therefore required, that just such sinful creatures as mankind are should exist, that they might be both the monuments of divine justice and of divine grace." On what ground, however, according to his scheme, God can be supposed to desire sin, or of what instrumentality it can be capable, neither he nor any of his followers seems to have taken the trouble to inquire. It cannot occupy the station of a second cause, nor be in any sense the means of an effect; as there are no se-

cond causes according to that system, and no effects whatever come into existence but such as God creates. To suppose, therefore, that he desires the existence of sin, in order that it may be employed as an instrument of displaying his aversion to it and love of holiness;—in other words, that it may be made the means of exerting a moral influence on his intelligent subjects, is an obvious solecism; as by the terms of the theory, no such influence ever is or can be exerted. How can sin be imagined to give rise to such an influence? It cannot give birth to any perception or feeling in the minds of dependent beings. The fact that it has been created in the minds of one world of creatures, cannot produce any effect in the minds of another. They can never become aware of its existence unless God create a perception of it in their minds. The sin itself therefore can never exert any influence on them. Whatever effect may take place in respect to it, must arise solely from the perception of it which the Most High creates—not from the sin itself. But that perception he might obviously as well create without the existence of the sin, as with it, as they have no possible connexion with each other, as cause and effect.

But it is a still more formidable objection to this system, that the perception itself cannot, according to its representation, contribute any instrumentality to the excitement of reverence, love, or any other affection toward the Creator, in the minds of his creatures, nor exert on them any influence whatever. Perceptions have no agency, according to its doctrine, in the production of convictions in the judgment, or feelings in the heart, nor motives any influence in giving birth to affections or choices; but they, like perceptions themselves, are the immediate effect of divine efficiency.

Sin therefore, if created, can never have any instrumentality whatever, nor be in any conceivable degree or manner, a means or occasion of exibiting the views of God toward it. Whatever sense his creatures gain of his aversion to it, and love of holiness, must be directly created by himself, and be as independent therefore of the sin itself as his existence is of theirs, and as capable accordingly of being produced in them, without the sin, as with it.

This total incompatibility of its two fundamental positions with each other, is thus a millstone on the neck of this theory, from which no efforts of its friends can ever extricate it.

Essentially similar views respecting the desires of the Most High, have been likewise entertained by many Calvinists, on the ground, it would seem, that according to their theory, no cause exists in the human constitution, or in the system of means employed to influence it, that can give birth to holiness in any other individuals, than those by whom it is in fact exerted. Inasmuch as physical obstacles lie in the way of obedience from the impenitent, and God does not desire impossibilities, it is inferred that he does not desire obedience from them; and the conclusion would undoubtedly be legitimate, were the premise correct. Were the natures of the unrenewed in truth such as to render it physically impossible that they should act obediently, it would be incontrovertibly certain that he could not desire them to act in that manner, as it would be to desire that effects should exist without a cause.

To those Calvinists however who regard men universally as possessing all the requisite capacities for obedience, that inference is unnecessary, and wholly unauthorised by their principles. If the endowments of men are such as to form

a proper ground for God's establishing a moral government over them, and to enable and place them under obligation to act obediently to his requirements; if their capacity is in fact the foundation and measure at once of his claims and their duty, then obviously, so far as that is concerned, no ground exists for denying or doubting that he desires them to exert that capacity in putting forth the actions which he has required from them in his word.

The position on this subject—that God desires men universally to obey in place of transgressing his requirements—which it was the object of several of the earlier numbers of this work to sustain, is beyond all legitimate question expressive of the fact; and the sermon under consideration, so far as it is occupied in the inculcation of that doctrine, is sanctioned by the voice of revelation, and merits the assent and approbation of the church.

Of the truth of this doctrine I shall neither recapitulate at large the proofs which are offered in the discourse, nor repeat those on which I have had occasion to dwell heretofore; but glance merely at their chief branches.

To deny its truth, is to impeach the sincerity of the Most High. He has, without any limitation or qualification whatever, required from men a perfect obedience to the demands of his moral government, and given to that requirement the utmost possible intensity, by the sanction of infinite rewards and penalties. And the reason of this solemn act of his administration of course is, if he is sincere in it, that he desires that obedience as unconditionally and absolutely as he requires it. If therefore he does not desire it, the end at which he aims is obviously totally diverse from that which he professes to seek, and the enactment accordingly

conveys to his creatures a false impression of his wishes and designs.

It is certainly and clearly inferred from the fact that *we* are required to desire the universal obedience of men. The first aspiration which the Redeemer has taught us to offer to God in prayer, is, that his name may be hallowed, and his will done on earth, as it in heaven ;—and this is in accordance with all the requirements and exhortations of the word of God, and meant to be expressive of the views and affections which it becomes us to cherish toward him. But to present this offering with appropriate sincerity and intenseness, the heart must obviously acquiesce in the object invoked, as unexceptionably and supremely desirable. To utter the wish without the desire, were mockery ; to offer it with the conviction that its fulfilment is undesirable to God, incompatible with his glory, and hostile to the well-being of his kingdom at large, were to affront him with the expression of evil wishes, in place of good. In devolving on us therefore the duty of cherishing this wish, he has rendered it necessary for us to act on the assumption that universal obedience from men is desirable to him also, as well as to ourselves, and made it incumbent on us accordingly to treat sin in all our views and wishes as an evil to the universe. But how is this compatible with the sentiment that it is essential to the well-being of the divine kingdom? that universal holiness were an evil? Are we to yield our assent to one doctrine as the revelation of God, but to act on the assumption that precisely the reverse of it is the truth? Are wisdom and benevolence in us, to be the opposites of what they are in him? Are we to delight supremely in his desiring what according to this

theory he does, and yet at the same time ourselves supremely to desire a totally different object?

But we are not dependent on these general inferences alone for proofs of this doctrine. It is presented to us in an express and formal manner in numerous passages of the sacred volume. Almost the first exhibition on the page of revelation of the feelings of the Most High in respect to sin, is that of regret at its prevalence. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." A clearer contradiction of the doctrine that he desires the rebellion of his creatures, can scarcely be imagined, than that which is offered in this passage, or a more solemn assertion that he regards its existence and prevalence with the aversion which is exhibited in the injunctions and prohibitions of his law.

In the following passages, and numerous others of a similar kind, we are presented with a formal and solemn expression of his desire of the obedience of those whom they respect, and grief at their incorrigible rebellion and consequent ruin. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying; if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

But beyond this, the Most High has specifically disclaimed the desire,—imputed to him by the dogma under consideration,—that his creatures should rebel, in order that he may display his hatred of sin and love of holiness by their punishment. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." We are thus taught as clearly in these solemn assurances that he does not desire sin for the sake of the manifestations of his justice which are made in its punishment, as we are in the prohibitions and penalties of his law, that he does not desire it from an approbation of its nature.

A doctrine thus clearly revealed on the sacred page, and fortified by so many momentous considerations, must be perplexed, it would seem, in the eyes of its adversaries, with insuperable objections, in order to justify the open and unhesitating denial of its truth, to which they are accustomed. What then are the grounds of their rejection of it? To meet the difficulties thrown in their way by the solemn declarations of the Most High which have been recited, it would seem essential that other passages should be produced exhibiting the opposite sentiment with at least equal explicitness. Are there then any portions of the word of God which as expressly assert, or assert at all, that he does not desire men universally to obey his requirements, but in place of it prefers the existence of sin to the extent to which it actually prevails? No such pretence has ever been made. Are any declarations or statements to be found on the page of revelation, that by fair and necessary construction in-

volve that inference? Not a solitary passage of the kind has ever been produced, nor a syllable alleged in which the faintest glimmering of such a sentiment can be made to appear. It is as clearly abhorrent to all the expressions and manifestations of the divine feelings, as,—what stronger expression can the language or conceptions of men furnish—as sin itself is. The teachers of this dogma have never pretended indeed to claim for its support the open and indubitable voice of revelation, nor scarcely in fact to derive it from the word of God. They have turned from the bright pages of inspiration for it, to the dark scenes of human agency, and founded it, not on what God has said, but on what man has done!

Their doctrine is a mere inference from the fact, that men actually commit sin, and the only consideration which they allege for its corroboration is, the fact that God does not employ efficacious means for its prevention. The fallacy of this conclusion is almost too palpable to need exposure, and the temerity and dangerousness of thus setting aside the volume of inspiration, its authoritative requirements and prohibitions, its solemn asseverations and dread denials, as the revealer to us of the desires of the Most High, and assuming that our only clue to his wishes, is furnished by the rebellious agency of men, too flagrant to require animadversion. Disentangled from the sophistry and technicalities in which it is involved, the whole argument on which the dogma rests, is simply this:—man sins; therefore God desires him to. That the word of God cannot be made to furnish any support of an argument, false in its principle, and blasphemous in its conclusion like this, no reasoning can be necessary to show. The wonder is, that its authors have not themselves been abashed at the startling error with

which it is fraught, of discarding the oracles of the Most High, and substituting in their place the guilt of man, as the key to the divine desires; of judging him by the actions of his creatures in their rebellion against him, instead of the measures of his own administration, and the declarations of his word; a rule which if authorised, must obviously be as applicable to one portion of the divine affections, as another, and will force us instantly to the conclusion, that sin is the object of *approbation* to him also, as well as to his creatures.

The teachers of this doctrine, in place of sustaining it by proofs or corroborations from the volume of inspiration, have been under the necessity first, of employing themselves in the more perplexing task, of endeavouring to reconcile it with the assurances with which the word of God abounds, that he desires men universally to obey his requirements, and is offended and grieved at their sins; and the expedient to which they have resorted, is as extraordinary as the sentiment it is employed to sustain;—that of ascribing to the Most High two precisely opposite desires respecting the actions of men; one founded on a partial consideration of their agency, the other on an all-comprehensive and perfect view of it. The desire which God feels and expresses of a perfect obedience from man, respects that obedience, they affirm, *in itself considered only*, not in its connexions with other beings and events. It has its whole foundation, and is dependent for its existence, on a limited regard of the interests which it involves, and vanishes from the Divine mind the instant his views are extended, so as to embrace all those interests. This distinction has obviously, however, neither any foundation in fact, nor any adaptation, if admitted, to relieve the doctrine from any of the difficulties with which it is perplexed.

It is, in the first place, like the scheme which it was contrived to sustain, wholly unauthorised by the scriptures. Not a syllable can be alleged from their pages, conveying an intimation, or authorising an inference, that the desires in question, which they ascribe to the Most High, are founded on partial and limited grounds, and are consequently subordinate to and directly the reverse of those which actually govern his conduct; but in all their exhibitions of these desires, he is obviously represented as contemplating obedience and sin, in precisely the same manner as he is in his requirements and prohibitions. To present any other exhibition, is so glaring an impeachment of his wisdom, as to fill one with amazement that any can have been inconsiderate or presumptuous enough to offer it.

But this denial, that God actually wishes men to obey his requirements, to any greater extent than they do, is embarrassed with the still more formidable difficulty of being a flat contradiction on the one hand, of the truth of the declarations which have been recited from his word, affirming that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil ways, and live," and that he "will have all men to repent, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" and a flagrant violation on the other, of the direction forbidding us to say when tempted, - "I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man."

The representation, moreover, that the measures of his moral administration, are founded on partial views of the interests which they involve, is in effect a denial of his knowledge, his wisdom, or his rectitude, to a degree to which we have no means of determining that a limit can be

assigned. What are the considerations affecting these great interests, which he is imagined to have overlooked or disregarded in the institution of his government? Did he shut out from his notice any portion of his own rights, or any of our capacities or obligations? Did he disregard any of his, or our relations to the rest of his kingdom? Did he omit to consider the nature either of obedience or sin, or any of their good or evil tendencies? Some one or more of these must of course have been the considerations which were excluded from his notice. But to represent him as having banished any of these from his regard, is obviously to detract from his perfection, and to charge him in effect with infinite folly, or malevolence. No government can be wise or good, that does not accord with the rights of the being who institutes it, or correspond to the nature of those over whom it is established, or that does not consult all the interests which it is destined to influence, in proportion to their importance.

This doctrine places the desire of holiness from men, which it imputes to the Most High, on a level with that which is felt by his rebellious creatures themselves. There is not a lost being in this world, nor a spirit in the world of darkness, that does not desire holiness for as numerous and cogent reasons, as this dogma permits us to ascribe to the Holy One of Israel. They do not, indeed, desire it enough to exercise it, nor does he, according to the scheme, enough to wish them to. They choose, all things considered, to continue to sin; and he in like manner chooses that they should. The only difference lies in their choosing it for its immediate, and he for its more remote effects.

It is a manifest and gross contradiction to the whole aspect of the divine administration, to represent it as founded

on only a partial regard to the interests with which it is connected. What consideration can the teachers of this doctrine designate, that can with any propriety be imagined to have been overlooked by the Most High, in the institution of his government. Was he inattentive in its establishment to any thing belonging to himself, as an infinite and all-perfect being, the creator and preserver of this and all other worlds? They will scarcely have the rashness to affirm this, as it is in precisely this character that he presents himself in all the acts of his administration, and proclaims his right to our obedience. Did he overlook anything in the nature, condition, relations, or obligations of men? To assert it, were to offer an equally flagrant contradiction to the whole character of his enactments. His commands obviously respect them precisely as they are, in nature and condition. They contemplate them in all their circumstances and relations, extend to all their thoughts, and form a perfect delineation of their obligations. What capacity was neglected in the commandment, which requires them "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength"? What obligations are there, that are not comprehended in the duties enjoined in the two great commands, on which hang all the law and the prophets? What relations or circumstances are there, either public or private, real or imaginable, for which no applicable precept is to be found in the gospel? Or did he exclude from his consideration the tendencies of obedience or disobedience, or the influence they were destined to exert on his kingdom at large? This supposition is equally contradicted by the fact, that the rewards and penalties assigned to their agency, are to extend throughout eternity, and to correspond in

magnitude as well as duration, to the good or evil effects to which they give birth. It is clear, then, that nothing can be designated, having any connexion with the subject, which the Most High shut from his consideration in the institution of his government, but that he had in its establishment a due regard to all the interests that were concerned; and it is equally clear, that all the other manifestations which he has made of his desires, correspond with the expression of them involved in that act.

This doctrine, moreover, is fraught manifestly with a fatal tendency to licentiousness. It is obviously neither compatible, if clearly understood and firmly believed, with reverence for God, nor an efficacious sense of obligation; but gives the rein to every selfish and desperate passion, by throwing over it the sanction of divine approval and public utility. Let it be openly and gravely taught, as a dictate of reason and a doctrine of revelation, that God does not desire men to love or obey him, any more than they do: that he is not only willing, but actually and intensely wishes them to be as selfish and unjust, as impure and deceitful, as hypocritical and impious, as they in fact are; and however much it may at first shock the consciences and convictions of its hearers, they will in multitudes at least, soon find themselves easily able to triumph over whatever feeble barriers are left to deter them from unbridled licentiousness and crime. If such effects have not hitherto extensively resulted from its inculcation, it is not because it is not adapted to produce them, but is owing to the numerous contradictory truths which happily have been taught in connexion with it, and counteracted its pernicious influence.

The boasted distinction in question, thus adds to the difficulties of the doctrine it is employed to vindicate, in place

of removing them, and furnishes evidence of nothing but the egregious error of the dogma itself, and the inadequate apprehensions and consideration of those, who have ascribed to it so high an importance, and so confidently taught it as a doctrine of God.

The question respecting the permission of sin, which remains to be considered, is obviously essentially distinct—however intimately they are connected—from that on which I have been dwelling, and is to be determined by distinct and different considerations. The answer to the first is matter of express and obvious revelation; but our conclusions in respect to the last, are inferences from what God has revealed.

What views then are we authorised to entertain respecting the reasons of the divine administration in the permission of sin? Why does the Most High place his creatures in such circumstances as to constitute a certainty that they will transgress his law? or, which is the same question, why does he employ only so limited a share of means as he does, to counteract their temptations, and leave them to be overborne, without further aid, by the inducements to sin?

Is it because sin is necessary as a means of advancing his glory and securing the general happiness of his kingdom? and is temptation designed expressly or in any degree to secure transgression, on the ground that he can pursue a better course of agency toward that, than toward obedience?

Is it, as the discourse under consideration represents, because no means exist by which sin can be prevented? that the nature of moral agents precludes the possibility of securing them from the successful influence of temptation, and that accordingly to go to any conceivable extent in

diminishing it, and increasing the inducements to obedience, would have no tendency whatever to obtain that result?

Or, is it because it pertains to him as a moral governor, to place his creatures in such circumstances of trial, as shall give a high value to their obedience, by making it an expression of decisive and ardent love to him and his kingdom? or, which is perhaps the same thing, is it because that to go farther than he has in the use of means for the prevention of sin, would on the whole be productive of more evil than good, and involve a course of agency less benevolent and glorious than that which he now pursues?

That it is not on the first of these grounds, is seen with certainty from the fact, which it has been the object of the foregoing pages to establish, that God desires men universally to yield obedience to his revealed will; as well as from many of the considerations by which that fact is demonstrated. To assume that sin is essential as an instrument to the manifestation of his glory, and advancement of his creatures' happiness, and assert that it is for that reason that he permits them to commit it, is in so many words to affirm that he desires its existence to the extent to which it prevails, in preference to holiness. If sin is an indispensable means of the greatest good, and if it is for that reason that he lays, by the arrangements of his providence, the foundation of the temptations by which we are incessantly prompted to it, and leaves us, without any further succour, to be borne away by their violence; it is clear beyond question, that he desires from us the commission of sin, in place of obedience. The proofs, therefore, which have been alleged, that such are not his wishes, but that he desires nothing except obedience from his creatures, render it equally certain that sin is not essential, by any natural necessity, to the wellbeing

of the universe; and that accordingly it is not on that ground, that it is permitted to exist. This fact is distinctly taught us also in the passages of the word of God, already referred to, in which the Most High expressly disclaims, with the solemnity of an oath, all desire of rebellion from his creatures, in order that he may enjoy an occasion of manifesting his justice in its punishment.

Nor is it, it is equally clear, on the ground assigned in the discourse under consideration, that no means exist by which dependent beings can be prevented from the commission of sin. The manner in which this sentiment is exhibited, is seen from the following passages.

"He does not prefer the present system to one which might have presented itself to his choice, had it been possible to retain all moral beings in obedience, but prefers it to the non-existence of a moral system, notwithstanding sin is its unavoidable attendant." "The nature of things as they now exist, forbids, as far as God is concerned, the more frequent existence of holiness in the place of sin. How do you know that the influence which he employs, even in respect to those who perish, is not all which the nature of the case admits? How do you know that he can maintain his moral government, or preserve moral agents in being as such, and prevent sin? Do you not pass the boundaries of human knowledge in saying, that he is able to prevent all sin, while he preserves unimpaired the freedom of accountable beings? Such may be the nature of free agents, that they cannot be governed in a manner to exclude sin, or to restrict it to a smaller compass than it actually possesses." p. 4, 9.

These passages exhibit the permission of sin as resulting from a physical necessity, not from moral reasons; from the want of adequate power, not from the non-exertion of it; or represent it rather, as being committed against the utmost efforts of the Most High to prevent it, instead of taking

place by his permission. The error of this representation is sufficiently apparent from the following considerations.

It implies that God has imparted to his creatures a power, over which he has no control. If the capacities of moral agents are such that he cannot determine the mode in which they are to be exercised, then clearly, they are, by their nature, placed, so far as their voluntary agency is concerned, beyond the control of his omnipotent hand, and enjoy the rank of independent beings;—a sentiment obviously as inconsistent with all the dictates of philosophy, as with the decisions of revelation.

It involves the assumption accordingly, that moral agents are not determined in their conduct by the influence of motives; or in other words, that their choices are not founded on their views of the objects toward which they exert them, and the agreeable or ungrateful emotions which their perceptions of them awaken. If the perceptions and involuntary emotions which take place within them, are the real objects toward which their volitions are exercised, and constitute the whole reason of their being exerted; then it clearly cannot be impossible for God, through that medium, to control their agency, and permit, or prevent their sin as he pleases. If, therefore, from their nature as moral agents, as the discourse represents, he cannot prevent them from sinning, it must be either that he cannot determine the nature of the moral influence that reaches their minds,—which is to represent them as placed without the sphere of his providential, as well as moral sway,—or else that they are not determined in their volitions by the influence of motives; a supposition that at once contradicts the whole testimony of our consciousness, subverts at a stroke every deduction of legitimate philosophy, and contravenes all the

great doctrines of revelation that respect our agency and nature.

It accordingly, in denying that motives are the means of determining the agency of men, involves the conclusion that the mode of their agency, or the species of actions which they exert, is a matter of sheer casualty, or else that it is determined by some mere physical cause, over which neither the influence of motives, nor the hand of the Creator, has any efficient control.

It is equivalent to a denial, therefore, that God can secure any degree of obedience from his creatures, or to any extent determine the nature of their agency. If the manner in which they act, is not in fact determined by any cause whatever, and none lies within the grasp of omnipotence by which it can be determined, then the events of their agency are obviously completely independent of his control, and he can neither wholly prevent them from sinning, nor render it certain that they will yield him any degree of obedience.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that this doctrine does not enjoy any countenance from the volume of inspiration. No intimations are presented to us there, that the Creator has imparted any powers to his creatures that are beyond his government; that from the very nature of moral agency, its events are incapable of subjection to his sway; that consequently neither any of his predictions, promises, nor threatenings, that respect the conduct of men, can have any certainty of fulfilment; and that his whole government, if not a sheer usurpation over beings whose nature renders them independent of his control, is at best a mere attempt to accomplish an impossibility. Nor are there any principles of interpretation, except such as shall wholly reverse

the meaning of language, by which the contrary representations of the sacred volume can be reconciled with this doctrine.

That portion then of the discourse under notice, which is employed in the inculcation of this sentiment, is wholly erroneous, and fraught with the subversion of the whole fabric of evangelical truth.

As then the reason, as we have seen, of the permission of sin, neither is that it is essential to the Most High, as an instrument of the greatest good, nor that no means exist by which he can intercept its exercise; it follows that the ground of his allowing it to be exerted is, that less good could be achieved by the system of measures which must be pursued in order to prevent its commission, than can be accomplished by that which permits its existence. The representation accordingly, which I have heretofore given, and of which I am now to offer some additional proofs and explanations is, that he leaves men to transgress, not because he cannot hinder them, nor because he prefers transgression in any instance to obedience, but because such a system must be adopted in order to exclude it, as would be incompatible with the attainment of as large an amount of good, as is secured under the present system.

This view of the subject, though obviously far from being consistent with many of their speculations, is substantially that which has been entertained by large numbers both of the most distinguished Calvinistic and Arminian theologians; and the obstacle probably to its general reception, lies chiefly in an imagined difficulty of reconciling the fact that the Most High does not prevent sin, with the doctrine on the one hand, that it is not impossible for him to prevent it, and on the other, that he neither regards it as an essen-

tial instrument to the well-being of his kingdom, nor desires its existence. Admitting—it is asked—that he does not desire the commission of sin, why is it that he places his creatures in circumstances of such extreme and incessant trial as to render it certain that they will transgress, unless he goes farther in the use of means to prevent it, than is ultimately consistent with the highest good of his kingdom?

Whatever other judgment may be formed on the subject, it is indubitably certain that this subjection of them to trial cannot authorise the inference that he desires them to rebel. To derive from it that conclusion, is not only to contravene the positions which have already been established, and the express decisions of the sacred word, but to aim a fatal blow at the whole system of the divine administration. It is in effect to assume, that it is incompatible with a desire of obedience from his creatures, to permit them to be assailed by any degree of temptation, or not to exempt them wholly from trial; an assumption that makes the mere fact that they are exposed to trial, demonstrative that God does not wish them to obey:—a sentiment most palpably false, and which, if adopted, must inevitably prove of the most fatal practical tendency. It will doubtless, however, be admitted that this conclusion cannot be supposed to be valid, except in respect to those temptations which are actually successful. But that is to admit that the mere fact of their subjection to trial, is no proof of his desiring them to sin, and is therefore to give up the whole ground of the inference, and consequently the inference itself. This limitation, however, of the conclusion, does not yield it any relief from the objection, for how is its pernicious tendency to be intercepted in even any such instance, when, from the issue being still in

futurity, it cannot possibly be seen that the temptation is not ultimately to prove triumphant.

The assumption is seen to be unauthorised, moreover, from the obvious impossibility of moral agents being so constituted, as wholly to exempt them from temptation; as it would require either such a modification of their nature, as to render them incapable of any degrees or modes of gratification that are sinful, or else such an arrangement of Providence, that no inducements that could excite to such gratifications, should ever reach their minds; which would obviously involve an absolute incapability of sinning. To make the assumption, therefore, is in fact to assume that the mere *creation* of beings *capable* of transgression, is demonstrative of a desire that they should sin; or in other words, that *the possibility* on their part of sinning, involves the certainty on the part of God of a desire that they should sin! a conclusion which, to pass over other considerations, is sufficiently refuted by the very principle on which it rests; since as an equal capacity for obedience always co-exists with that for sin, it must, if the ground of the inference is admissible, for the same reason constitute as decisive proof of an opposite, and therefore incompatible, desire of obedience. Nor can the mere fact, that men are placed in circumstances of temptation, furnish any ground for the inference that God desires them to sin, for the same reason, that if the principle on which the inference rests is valid, the inference itself is intercepted by the fact, that the inducements to obedience which always co-exist with temptation, furnish equal ground for precisely the opposite conclusion.

Many of the temptations, however, that incessantly assail us, and exert by far the most important influence over our destiny, are not necessarily incident to our existence, but

wholly adventitious. Such, for example, were the temptations addressed by the adversary to our first parents. His intrusion into their presence, cannot be regarded as a necessary consequence of the existence of this world and its inhabitants, and had he been debarred the gates of Paradise, there is probably no sufficient reason to infer that the beings and scenes by which the first pair were surrounded, would have ever given birth to temptation sufficiently strong to have overcome their allegiance. On what ground, then, it is naturally asked, is it to be accounted for, that the Most High allows his creatures to be assailed by trials so much superior to those which are unavoidably incident to their existence?

Whatever other views we may choose to adopt, it is indubitably certain here, as in the former instance, that their subjection to these extraordinary temptations does not furnish any ground for the conclusion, that his object in it is, to involve them in transgression; since that inference, were it otherwise legitimate, is totally refuted by the equally certain and opposite one, which on the same principle must be drawn, from the adscititious inducements to obedience which always attend and are expressly instituted for the purpose of counteracting these temptations. If their extraordinary trials can be imagined to indicate the one, the still more extraordinary excitements and promptings to holiness, which are employed to counteract them, indubitably demonstrate the other. These adventitious temptations owe their existence solely to the agency of creatures, of men on each other, or of the prince of darkness; but God himself has interposed to bring to us a supernatural array of motives to enable us to resist them; and it becomes us, surely, to interpret his wishes by his own benignant and miraculous

interventions in our behalf, and not by the opposing and malevolent agency of his creatures.

The ground, therefore, of this measure of his administration, doubtless is simply, that it pertains to him as the creator, preserver, and rewarder of his creatures,—in order alike to his receiving that service from them which is his due, and to his attaining the highest good of his kingdom, —to place them in conditions in which they may render an obedience, corresponding in intenseness and extent to his rights and their capacities. Their nature lays a foundation for their exhibiting holiness in a variety of forms, according to their diversified relations to him, and the various characters and conditions of their fellow men, and there is obviously an intrinsic propriety in his placing them in circumstances, in which they may manifest their submission to his rights in those various forms, and fill up, according to its extent and diversity, the measure of their capacity for his service.

The value of obedience, moreover, as an expression of devotedness, obviously depends essentially on the difficulties which are overcome in its exercise. Fervour and inflexibleness in love, are never so adequately shown, as when it triumphs over obstacles, and struggles through conflicts; and the full measure of homage of which the soul is capable, is never drawn forth, except by exigencies that excite all its sensibilities, and summon all its energies to action. In placing mankind, therefore, in these conditions, he does but lay the requisite foundation on the one hand, for his receiving, and for their yielding, on the other, the homage which is his due, and fulfil the responsibilities of his station as the ruler, guardian, and rewarder of his creatures; and he obviously accomplishes all the dictates of infinite know-

ledge, justice, and benevolence, in thus placing them in that series of conditions, in which on the one hand, their obedience, if rendered, will accomplish the highest sum of good, and in which, on the other, if not rendered, he can pursue such a system of administration toward them as transgressors, as to remedy the evils of their rebellion, and give existence in the end to as great and glorious a system of events, as though they had maintained their allegiance. The fact, accordingly, that he places them in circumstances to make such an exhibition of their regard and render a service of high value, in place of sustaining the opposite conclusion, constitutes indubitable proof, that he desires from them an obedience that accords in energy and completeness with his rights and their ability.

There is a similar propriety, also, in his requiring such an exhibition of devotedness, in order that he may appropriately treat them as worthy of the rewards which are assigned to obedience, and confer on them the tokens of his full approbation. Nothing, obviously, less than a service conclusively manifesting a supreme consecration to him, could constitute an adequate ground for such an expression of his approval. It were unbecoming his rectitude and wisdom, to crown inertness with the meed of activity, indifference with the rewards of zeal, or uselessness with the honours of beneficence and utility; or to disregard in the expression of his approbation, the differing degrees of his creatures in these virtues.

Such an obedience from men in the various conditions in which they are placed, would, moreover, with its attendant rewards, constitute as great a sum of good, as could be attained by any other system of administration on his part, or differing course of agency on theirs; as it would accom-

plish all the demands of justice on them, and fill up the measure both of their obligations and their capacities of doing and enjoying good. And it pertains to him, doubtless, as their providential ruler, to place them in the circumstances in which the discharge of their duty would give birth to that result. To adopt a system in which, even were they to render the full extent of service required, only an inferior degree of good could be attained, were inconsistent alike with his justice and benevolence. This great measure of his administration, thus obviously has its foundation necessarily in their mutual relations as Creator and creatures, and in the effects that are to result from their agency.

We are not left, however, to the conclusions of unassisted reason, for the vindication here offered of the ways of God to men, nor indebted to them, indeed, for it, as all the great principles involved in these views are not only recognised, but expressly taught in the volume of inspiration.

Thus, that the value of obedience is enhanced by the difficulties under which it is rendered, and the degree of effort and devotedness which it implies, is taught us in the great rule of the divine government, of measuring rewards by the strength and extent of the proofs that are given of fidelity and zeal. To those in the parable of the servants, whose usefulness had equalled the extent of their capacity, corresponding expressions of approval and rewards were assigned; while the slothful servant who had hid his money in the earth, and—like those who attempt to justify their rebellion by the doctrine which I have been opposing,—spent his time in denying his Lord's desire that he should improve the talent with which he was entrusted, and in questioning his rectitude, was in righteous retribution di-

vested of the neglected gift, and abandoned to remediless poverty and suffering. It is "to him that *overcometh*"—that the Saviour saith—"will I give to eat of the hidden manna," and "to him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father, in his throne." "They that be *wise*," are they that "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

We are in like manner expressly taught, that the object of the Most High in these allotments is, to try the hearts of his creatures, and impose on them a necessity of a decisive choice of his service, if it is chosen at all, and to call forth from them an indubitable expression of supreme love. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no: and he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee to know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live." "Because this people hath transgressed my covenant, which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice, I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died, that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not." And the ends at which he thus aimed in these providential dispensations, are those for which all the similar measures of his administration are instituted.

And finally the great fact is presented to us on the sacred page with equal explicitness and force, that severe trials of the heart are requisite to fit his creatures for distinguished blessings, and render it meet for him to confer on them the tokens of his approbation. Thus the dread storms of adventitious trial and affliction which the humility and faith of Job were called to encounter, were expressly designed to demonstrate the truth and supremacy of his love, and silence the false suggestions of the adversary, that his expressions of regard were the mere offspring of selfish gratitude, dependent for their continuance on the continuance of his prosperity, and that accordingly the tokens of divine favour with which he was distinguished, were lavished on hypocrisy and worthlessness. And it is the usual course of his providence, that great trials of faith and submission precede the grant of eminent expressions of his approbation. Abraham was called to the sacrifice of his son, before being fully constituted the father of the faithful, and his obedience in that act was treated as a decisive proof of his supreme and lasting regard. "And the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven and said,—now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." The youth of Joseph was long embittered by persecution and servitude, and the age of Jacob overclouded by want and bereavement, before the one was made the instrument, and the other the subject of the signal manifestations of divine mercy, by which they were advanced to prosperity in Egypt, and forty years of sufferings and trials in the wilderness, were appointed to their descendants, before their admission to the land of promise. The royal psalmist, in his progress from the sheepfold to the throne, suffered years of

exile, want and danger, in which were taught those lessons of dependence, trust in God, and submission, which the Spirit of inspiration had destined to be embodied by him in song, to serve as the vehicle of the adoring acknowledgments, thanks and praises of the church through all succeeding ages. Nor was the Son of God himself in the days of his incarnation, exempted from this great law of the divine administration, but was made like unto his brethren in trials, as well as in nature; and their propriety and necessity in order to his exaltation to the mediatorial crown, are expressly recognised in the sacred volume. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour. For it *became him* for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect *through sufferings.*"

These views are moreover sanctioned by the convictions and testimony of the pious of all ages. They never practically—in contradiction to the declarations of the divine word—contemplate the temptations which they are called to encounter, as indications of a desire on the part of the Most High that they should yield to their influence. Such an interpretation of them is as revolting to every sentiment of the sanctified mind, as it is impious to God. In place of that, they are accustomed to regard the chastisements with which they are visited by the hand of providence, as righteous rebukes of their sins, and the temptations by which they are assailed, as necessary trials of thei fidelity, designed and adapted—instead of seducing them to licentiousness—to develope and give strength to their faith, submission, and watchfulness. And such are in truth the effects to which these disciplinary allotments cus-

tomarily give birth. Seasons of trial to the children of God, are as a general law, seasons of quickened penitence, invigorated faith, and brightened hope; and to the church at large, as well as to her individual members, her sharp conflicts contribute to heighten her graces, and give effulgence to her armour. That afflictions are thus usually the means of sanctification, and the ceaseless buffetings and trials of life, the instruments of accelerated progress in holiness and more decisive victories over the world, is alike the universal experience and confession of the pious.

Whether therefore we look to the sentiments and convictions which are characteristic of the children of God, to the deductions of reason, or to the decisions of revelation, we are conducted with equal certainty to the conclusion which I have endeavoured to sustain respecting the reasons of the divine administration in the appointment to his creatures of this system of trial; that it is a necessary measure of his moral government, and is designed and adapted to subserve the well-being of the individuals who are the immediate subjects of its influences as well as the ultimate interest of his kingdom at large, and is as expressive and demonstrative of his desire of their obedience, as are the requirements and prohibitions of his law.

I shall only refer in additional corroboration of these views, to the recommendatory characteristics by which they are distinguished from the system to which they stand opposed.

They are not embarrassed, like that scheme, with the fatal objection of a palpable contradiction to any of the plain statements that are presented on the pages of revelation. They do not require, in order to an accordance with the word of God, that any of its facts should be denied, or over-

looked, or any of its representations explained away; nor that any double import should be ascribed to its language, or unnatural limitation imposed on its meaning, in order in appearance to escape contradictions or elude inconsistencies. Nor do they, that I am able to discover, involve any positions, like that theory, that cannot be carried out to their legitimate results, without leading to some collision with the statements, or subversion of the doctrines of the gospel.

They cannot be accused, like the opposite dogma, of giving the rein to licentiousness, or at best, of weakening the inducements to holiness by doubt and perplexity, but obviously contemplate the capacities and obligations of men as they are exhibited in the divine requirements, and give to every motive by which those obligations are urged, all the force with which it is presented in the injunctions and sanctions of the sacred volume. And they are indubitably moreover the views on which the children of God in fact act in all their obedience. They are not accustomed when assailed by the impulses of temptation, to blunt the monitions of conscience, or soften the apprehensions of guilt, by the assumption or hope, that in yielding to transgression they shall fulfil in place of offending the wishes of infinite purity and benevolence, nor ever impeach God as their tempter, but conscious that their danger arises from themselves, rush to him as their deliverer, and gain their victories through the succours of his grace.

Nor are these views, like those to which they are opposed, indebted for their foundation to remote and shadowy inferences from what on the one hand the folly and malevolence of men have ventured to perpetrate, nor from what on the other, the wisdom and rectitude of God have not chosen to achieve; but have for their support the funda-

mental principles of the divine administration, and the obvious representations of the volume of truth, and enjoy moreover the corroborating sanction of an entire accordance with the dictates of conscience and the decisions of common sense.

They accordingly present an explanation of these great measures of the divine administration, by which their difficulties are adequately solved, and their claims to the character of rectitude and wisdom vindicated; and they are the only views moreover that exhibit such a justification of the ways of God to man, or that are not perplexed with insuperable inconsistencies with the apprehensions of reason, and the decisions of his word.

I commend them therefore to the calm consideration and impartial judgment of the friends of religion, in the hope that they may enjoy their approval, and contribute to confirm their convictions of the unimpeachable consistency and rectitude of all the measures of the divine government.

VIEWS

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CONTENTS.

ART. I.—The Christian Spectator's Review of Bellamy on the Permission of Sin . . . 343

ART. II.—The Christian Spectator's Review of Dr. Woods' Letters 410

THE Views in Theology will continue to be published semi-annually, in May and November, and be devoted chiefly, as heretofore, to discussion on the Doctrines of Religion. Four numbers will form a volume. Those who desire the work will please to give notice to the publisher, at 142 Nassau-street. Ministers and theological students of whatever denomination, will receive it, if desired, without charge.

THE

CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR'S

REVIEW OF

BELLAMY ON THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

THE gentleman on whose attempts to fortify his views of the nature and cause of sin by the authority of Dr. Dwight and President Edwards, some remarks were offered in a former number, has thought proper, in the Christian Spectator for September 1830, to claim the sanction of Dr. Bellamy for the hypothesis offered by him in his Concio ad Clerum, respecting the reasons of the admission of sin into the universe. As his representations intimately concern the character of that writer,—who has hitherto been ranked in respect to talents, doctrines, and usefulness, among the most distinguished of his day,—and involve, indeed, very essentially the reputation of the clergy at large of New-England, both of that and the present time, it is a matter of some importance to ascertain their truth or error. The inquiry is also fraught with interest to those who look inquisitively at the relations of things, by the circumstance that the theory, which the reviewer himself professes to have advanced only as a mere "supposition" or conjecture, without attempting to prove or presuming to affirm its truth,

or venturing even to "intimate" that it can possibly be sustained by any "decisive evidence," and the imputation of which to him by Dr. Woods in the form of a "positive assertion," he exhibits as utterly unjust and extremely injurious, he nevertheless represents Dr. Bellamy as having formally taught, highly to the credit of his genius and wisdom, and deliberately sustained through a discussion of great length. To be able to discover in what manner intricacies like these can be successfully threaded by the reviewer, and the sunshine of consistency thrown over such conflicting appearances, cannot fail to yield entertainment to the curious, and gratification to the lovers of logic.

What the nature of that theory is, is seen from the following passages from the sermon in which it was first presented to the public, and from the forementioned article in the Spectator, in which the reviewer professedly gives a restatement and explanation of its import.

"Do you say then that God gave man a nature which he knew would lead him to sin? What if he did? Do you know that God could have done better, better on the whole, or better, if he gave him existence at all, even for the individual himself? The error lies in the gratuitous assumption, that God could have adopted a moral system, and prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin. For no man knows this;—no man can prove it. The assumption, therefore, is wholly unauthorized as the basis of the present objection.

"The difficulties on this difficult subject, as it is extensively regarded, result in the view of the writer from two very common but groundless assumptions—assumptions which so long as they are admitted and reasoned upon, *must* leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties.

"The assumptions are these; First, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead.* Secondly, *that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin.*"

" The second assumption now claims our notice; viz. *that God could have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in a moral system.*

" If holiness in a moral system be preferable on the whole to sin in its stead, why did not a benevolent God, were it possible to him, prevent all sin, and secure the prevalence of universal holiness? Would not a moral universe of perfect holiness, and of course of perfect happiness, be happier and better than one comprising sin and its miseries? And must not infinite benevolence accomplish all the good it can? Would not a benevolent God then, *had it been possible to him in the nature of things*, have secured the existence of universal holiness in his moral kingdom?

" Is the reader startled by an inquiry which seems to limit the power of God? But does not *he* equally limit the power of God by supposing, or, rather, affirming, that God COULD NOT secure the greatest good without the existence of sin? On either supposition there is what may be called a limitation of the power of God, by *the nature of things.* In the one case the limitation is supposed to result from *the nature of sin;* in the other from *the nature of moral agency.* If then one of these suppositions must be made, which is the most honorable to God?

" Who does most reverence to God, he who supposes that God *would* have prevented all sin in his moral universe, but *could* not, or he who affirms that he *could* have prevented it, but *would* not? Or is it more honorable to God to suppose that such is the nature of *sin* that he *could not* accomplish the highest good without it, than to suppose that such is the nature of *free agency*, that God could not wholly prevent its perversion?

" But the main inquiry on this point still remains,—Does the supposition that God could not prevent sin in a moral system, limit his power at all? To suppose or affirm that God cannot perform what is *impossible in the nature of things*, is not properly to limit his power. Is there then the least particle of evidence that the entire prevention of sin, in moral beings, is possible to God in the nature of things? If not, then what becomes of the very common assumption of such possibility?

" All evidence of the truth of this assumption must be derived either from *the nature of the subject*, or from *known facts.* Is there such evidence from *the nature of the subject?* It is here to be remarked,

that the prevention of sin by any influence that destroys *the power to sin*, destroys moral agency. Moral agents then must possess *the power to sin*. Who then can prove *a priori*, or from the nature of the subject, that *a being who* CAN *sin, will* NOT *sin?* How can it be proved *a priori*, or from the nature of the subject, that a thing will not be, when for aught that appears, it *may* be? On this point is it presumptuous to bid defiance to the powers of human reason?

"Is there any evidence from *facts?* Facts, so far as they are known to us, furnish no support to the assumption, that God could in a moral system prevent all sin, or even the present degree of sin. For we know of no creature of God, whose holiness is secured without that influence which results either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment. How then can it be shown *from facts*, that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness, without this influence; or to what purpose is it to allege instances of the prevention of sin *under* this influence, to prove that God could prevent it *without* this influence?"

—"The assumption therefore that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or the present degree of sin, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized, and *ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument.*"—Concio ad Clerum, p. 29—33.

"Before we proceed, we wish to be perfectly understood in the distinction already made between 'a necessary means of the greatest good,' and 'a necessary incident to a moral system.' The wheels of a watch are 'a necessary means' of regulating the motion of its hands; the friction of those wheels is 'necessarily incidental' to the existence of such a machine. Each wheel, in its character of a means, constitutes an *integral part* of the system of machinery, devised and executed by the artist. Friction is no part of that system; it is an evil to which he submits, a limitation on the exercise of his skill, resulting from the nature of the materials of which the watch is made. The direct *tendency* of every wheel, if properly adjusted, is to produce the desired result. There is no such tendency in friction, it is an evil to be encountered, and as far as possible to be set aside. It should be remarked, however, that although friction is thus an evil, it may in some machines, be converted to a partially valuable end; it may be used, for example, to modify or retard their motion. But although thus overruled in part, for useful purposes, still it is no

less true, that friction *enters* into machines as necessarily incidental to their very existence."—*Christian Spectator*, p. 532.

Whatever may be thought of the relations of this theory to the decisions of reason and doctrines of revelation, but one opinion can exist respecting its import.

1. The sole reason it teaches that sin has been permitted to enter the universe is, that it is physically impossible for the Almighty Ruler to prevent its commission. This is the representation conveyed in nearly every sentence of the forecited passages, and in a still larger number that might be added from the sermon and review, and is too palpably the only import that the language can bear, to leave it possible that any can make it in sobriety a matter of denial or question. To suppose "that God *could* in a moral system *have prevented all sin;* or at least *the present degree of sin,*" is "a groundless assumption" he assures us;—an "assumption," the proof of which by "the least particle of evidence," "either from the nature of the subject, or from known facts," bids "defiance to the powers of human reason";—which "ought never," therefore, "to be made the basis of an objection or an argument"; and which, as long as it is "admitted and reasoned upon, *must* leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties." The reason accordingly, so far as God is concerned, that sin has not been entirely debarred from existence, is purely of a physical, in place of a moral nature—"that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings, is" "impossible" "to God in the nature of things."

2. That is of course in like manner the reason that "the present degree of sin" is suffered to exist; for God carries his efforts at its prevention in every instance, it requires

us to believe, to the utmost extent of which infinite knowledge and omnipotence are capable, and fails of his object, not from any want of will, but solely from the necessary "limitation" of his efficiency. Such is indeed the literal import of his language, and the object of his argument from the benevolence of God, and cannot be disclaimed without a retraction of the whole theory. To grant that God in a solitary instance yields existence to sin, when he has power to prevent it, is to adopt, according to his representation, the "very common but groundless assumption" that he "*could* in a moral system have prevented" "at least the present degree of sin"—which as "long" as it is "admitted and reasoned upon, *must* leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties." The mighty one of Jacob is thus involved, according to the theory, in a perpetual contest of strength with the creatures of his power, who have "their foundation in the dust, and are crushed before the moth," and is baffled by them in every instance in which they commit a transgression.

3. The cause accordingly, or power that gives birth to sin in every instance, so far as the production of that effect is concerned, is wholly independent of God. It lies entirely without the sphere of his efficient control, or rises superior to any force with which he can oppose it. They who commit sin, are "beings who as free agents *can* sin," and do sin "in *defiance* of all preventing influences," and their "prevention is" absolutely "impossible" from "a limitation of the power of God by the nature of things." They are as completely independent therefore of his control, so far as sin is concerned, as he is of theirs, and it may as truly be said of each of them as of him, that "none can stay his hand, nor say unto him, what doest thou."

4. The ground he informs us of this "limitation of the power of God," and of their superiority to his efficient sway, lies in "the nature of moral agency" itself, or the attributes and powers that necessarily enter into the constitution of a voluntary intelligence. "Moral agents must possess the power to sin," and all who possess that power, "are beings who can sin in defiance of all possible influence to prevent" it. They are necessarily therefore, by the force of their constitution, wholly independent, so far as sin is concerned, of the divine control.

5. To prevent beings from sinning, or secure them from transgression, is so to constitute the succession of perceptions, or moral influence that excites them to action, and determines their choices, as effectually to prompt them to obedience. To possess the *power* of preventing them from sin, is, accordingly, to be able to determine the moral influence that reaches them, and to cause it to consist of such a series and combination of views as to constitute a certainty that they will act without exception in an obedient manner. The theory of the reviewer, therefore, in denying to God the possibility of preventing moral agents from sinning, either denies him the power of determining the motives that control their conduct, or else denies that their voluntary agency is in fact determined by the influence of motives. If it denies him the power of determining that influence, then it exhibits his creatures as independent of him in respect to perceptions as well as volitions. If it denies that motives actually determine their mode of action, then it denies that there is any real moral cause or reason that they exert the volitions which they do; and accordingly, that any certainty whatever exists beforehand of the manner in which they act. But in thus denying to God the sole medium of prescience,

it necessarily denies his prescience itself, and sweeps from our grasp every ground of confidence in his predictions and promises that relate to their agency. Neither he nor any other being has the slightest certainty, that any one of our race will continue everlastingly to obey him, or be "kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation;" nor that any one of the countless multitude of his creatures will for ever abstain from revolt, nor even that a solitary act of obedience will ever again transpire in any part of his dominions.

6. If God is thus incompetent to govern his creatures, and can neither determine nor foresee any event in their agency, it is clear, if he is a being of wisdom, that he cannot have undertaken the accomplishment of such effects, and that therefore his *plan* can only have extended to those events which lie completely within his power. This theory accordingly represents that his plan or moral system only embraces the worlds and beings which he has created, and events to which he himself gives existence by his direct efficiency, and not any of the events of their agency. Thus in the passages which have been quoted, he exhibits *sin* as "*incidental*" to, or a "*consequence*" of the divine system or plan, not a part of that plan itself; and states in a note, that "the term incidental is here used in the sense assigned to it by Johnson, viz. 'falling in *beside* the main design.'" In the illustration, likewise, which he institutes for the purpose of being "perfectly understood," in the distinction between "a necessary means of the greatest good," and a "necessary *incident* to a moral system," he says, "each wheel in its character of a means, constitutes an *integral part* of the system of machinery devised and executed by the artist: friction," which according to his representation,

is incidental to the machine as sin is to God's plan, "*is no part of that system.*" He speaks also in other passages of the divine plan "in distinction from the evil which is its consequence," and alleges it as a proof that Dr. Bellamy held his theory, that "God's plan," "according to Dr. Bellamy, does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God does;" and that "Dr. Bellamy most explicitly concedes that sin is no part of God's scheme or plan."

His representation thus is, that the plan of the Most High includes neither the sin nor obedience of his creatures, but only consists of what he himself does, or merely embraces the worlds, beings, and events, of which he is the efficient cause, to the exclusion alike of the evil and the good which are the consequences of his agency.

Such is the import of this extraordinary theory, which by throwing sin wholly without the limits of the divine sway, is to exonerate the Most High from responsibility respecting it, and enable "the mind" "to view" his "character and government" in a mode "that shows them to be free from embarrassment!" All these positions enter with the clearest certainty into the hypothesis, are graven on its front with a pen of iron, and cannot be withdrawn from it, nor defaced, without a total dispersion of its elements.

The manner in which he exhibits Dr. Bellamy as having held and taught this theory, is seen from the following passages.

"Dr. Bellamy, in accounting for God's permission of sin, has not adhered throughout to any one hypothesis. On the contrary, he has at different times reasoned on at least two different hypotheses, according to the nature of the difficulties which were presented to his view. These are,

" 1. That sin is the necessary means of the greatest good.

" 2. That the *system* or *plan* which God adopted (not the sin which was incidental to it, as a certain consequence) is the necessary means of the greatest good.

" This latter hypothesis, we need hardly say, is the one which we have *affirmed*, in common with Dr. Taylor, in his sermon on the nature of sin—not that it *is* true, or can be supported by absolutely *decisive* evidence—but that it *may* be true, and that it has never yet been *proved to be false.* This, we wish it to be remembered, is the whole extent of our position on this subject.

" It may strike our readers as singular, that a man of Dr. Bellamy's acuteness and force of mind, should have reasoned in different parts of his treatise, on different and inconsistent hypotheses. But this fact is easily accounted for, if we consider the nature and object of the discussion in which he was engaged. The grand topic of controversy at that period, was the *extent* of God's decrees and providential government. Do they include the existence of moral evil? Can the character of God be vindicated upon such a supposition? The discussion on which Dr. Bellamy entered was not, therefore, as it now is, an inquiry among Calvinists, which of the various theories to account for moral evil is the most correct? He was called upon to defend the *general* doctrine of the universality of the divine decrees, and providential government; and the objection which he had to encounter was this, that they could not be supposed to embrace the existence of moral evil without impeaching the holiness and perfection of the divine character. He was not led therefore by the nature of the discussion to propound any single theory, which might obviate all the objections alleged. He was aiming to defend the general doctrine against those who maintained that *all* the existing theories on the subject united, could never vindicate the character of God, if the existence of sin was embraced within his eternal purposes. It is not surprising, therefore, that in one course of reasoning to prove the perfection of God's universal government, he should reason upon one hypothesis; and yet, when the subject was presented under entirely another aspect, or when by the pressure of new objections, his mind was intently fixed on their most effectual refutation, he should inadvertently found his answer on another hypothesis. Thus when his object was to account for sin simply in view of the benevo-

lence and omnipotence of God, the theory that 'sin is the necessary means of the greatest good' would naturally occur. But when the *sincerity* of God as a lawgiver was questioned, it would at least be equally natural to resort to the position, that 'not sin itself in preference to holiness, but the *system* to which sin is incidental, is the necessary means of the greatest good.'

"In ascribing to Dr. Bellamy the theory, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good*, it is but just to remark, that he proposes it often in the form of a mere hypothesis, or as what *may* be true. Thus he says, 'it is easy to see how there may be eternally more holiness and happiness in the angelic world, than if sin and misery had been for ever unknown.' In other instances, however, he adopts the form of positive assertion. He states, too, that 'if God had pleased, he *could* have hindered the existence of sin.' And this he supposes might have been done in perfect consistency with free agency. It is obvious, therefore, that Dr. B. in a part of his reasoning, proceeds on the supposition that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. And we are perfectly willing that such statements on his part, should have all the weight to which they are entitled, in a full view of the facts. Should it appear, however, that these statements are not more irreconcileable with the views which we have expressed, than with many things advanced by himself; that he was led to adopt this theory *through the inadvertence* we have already specified;—that in stating the question at issue, in many of his reasonings, and especially in answering objections to the perfection of the divine character and government, he has virtually adopted the position that 'sin (in respect to the divine prevention) is *incidental* to the best system,' then may his authority be appealed to with equal, or even greater propriety, in support of the principles which we have advocated on this subject.

"We take leave of this treatise with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret;—pleasure, to find Dr. Bellamy meeting the enemies of divine sovereignty on that vantage ground, which we think ought never to be relinquished;—regret, that *in any instance*, he should yield it to his opponents, *and be thus driven to adopt a theory which made him inconsistent with himself.*"—Christian Spectator, p. 529. 532. 539.

The representation in these passages thus is, that although Dr. Bellamy, "at different times, reasoned on at least two

different hypotheses, according to the nature of the difficulties that were presented to his view," yet the theory which he really held, professed to maintain, and relied on to obviate the great difficulties of his subject, was that of the reviewer, which denies that "sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," and affirms that the sole reason of its being permitted to take place is, that God is incompetent to exclude it from his kingdom. The other hypothesis he never formally and intentionally advanced,—the intimation is—but only "reasoned on" it "at different times," "through" mere "inadvertence," without knowing either what he said or whereof he affirmed. It was only "when the subject was presented under entirely another aspect, or when by the pressure of new objections, his mind was intently fixed on their most effectual refutation,"—an admirable reason for adopting "groundless assumptions," and arguing on false principles,—that he "inadvertently founded his answer on the hypothesis," "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good;" and it was by yielding to "the enemies of divine sovereignty" the "vantage ground" of the other hypothesis, that "in any instance" he was "thus *driven* to adopt a theory which made him inconsistent with himself."

The reviewer does, indeed, admit, in a faint and stifled voice, that Dr. Bellamy, "in other instances, adopts the *form* of positive assertion" respecting that "groundless assumption," but qualifies it by the "remark," that it is only "in the form of a mere hypothesis, or as what *may be* true," "that he proposes it often;" and gains courage at length as he advances in the discussion, to retract even that concession, and roundly affirm, first, that "the inference is unavoidable, that at *times*, certainly, and with good reason, Dr. B. regarded sin, not as 'the necessary means of the greatest

good,' but as a baleful evil *incident* to the best system;" and finally, that "it is manifest from the manner in which Dr. Bellamy *generally* speaks of the results of the system, that he *did not regard sin as the necessary means of the greatest good*, but merely as *overruled*, like friction in the case already supposed, for the production of *much good*." The reviewer proceeds.

"He asserts nothing so often as that the existing *plan* is the best; but he ordinarily speaks of its ultimate consequences in very guarded terms. He says, 'we have the greatest reason to *believe* it will issue well,' that 'we have a sure *prospect* of a happy issue,' that 'it is *suited* to exalt the Deity,' and that '*perhaps* the system will be more happy, than if sin had never been permitted.' In the last of these clauses we see a *leaning* toward the stronger assertions which he has *occasionally* advanced. But the preceding ones, *together with a great number of others which might be produced*, go to show *only* that the present may be better than any other possible system, *notwithstanding* the attendant evil of sin, which is thus beneficially overruled. To this we yield our unqualified assent. But it differs *toto cœlo* from the revolting dogma, that sin is *necessary* in the universe, as the means of more good than could result from holiness in its place."—p. 539.

The affirmation is thus as direct and explicit, as any language at least that the reviewer is accustomed to employ, can possibly render it, that Dr. Bellamy *ex animo* held, and intentionally taught that theory respecting the existence of sin in the divine kingdom, which the reviewer advanced in his Concio ad Clerum, and has again undertaken to explain and defend in the review under consideration; and that it was only by "inadvertence," and yielding "to his opponents" what "ought never to be relinquished," "that he was *driven* to adopt," the opposite "hypothesis," "that

sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," and thus became " inconsistent with himself."

The reviewer, apprehensive it would seem that his readers might find some difficulty in crediting this representation, thought it necessary to endeavor to conciliate their acquiescence by showing how it " would naturally occur," " that a man of Dr. Bellamy's acuteness and force of mind," should fall into these extraordinary inconsistencies. His " hypothesis," however, is unfortunately only " a groundless assumption," that in place of yielding to his representation any additional verisimilitude, is itself perplexed, if possible, with stronger improbabilities than the imaginary " fact" which it is its object to explain.

The first objection to it is, that it proceeds on a total and flagrant misrepresentation of both the theme and the object of Dr. Bellamy's " treatise." " This fact," he says— " that Dr. Bellamy reasoned on different hypotheses"—" is easily accounted for, if we consider *the nature* and *object* of the discussion in which he was engaged. The grand topic of controversy at that period, was the *extent* of God's decrees and providential government." In place of this however, " the grand" and sole " topic of controversy" " in which he was engaged" in the " treatise" was, " the wisdom of God in the permission of sin," as the title itself of the " Sermons" and " Vindication," his statement of their theme and object, and the whole course of his argumentation indisputably demonstrate. " The *extent* of God's decrees and providential government," instead of being " the grand topic" which it was his object to establish, is not formally stated, nor attempted to be proved in a solitary instance, nor scarcely indeed alluded to throughout the main body of his discourse, and no reference whatever

is there made to it, except simply for the purpose of proving "the wisdom of God in the permission of sin." He has not in fact made "the extent of God's decrees" a theme of discussion on a single page of the work, nor "the extent" of his "providential government," except in his "Vindication of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin," published a considerable time subsequently to the Sermons; and not even there, until after having finished his argument, and forced, as he supposed, from the writer whom he was opposing, a formal confession of his error, he finally dismisses him with an exhortation to "be firmly persuaded that not the devil, but God, and God alone, is the absolute governor of this world,"—in which as it happens, he employs "the extent of God's providential government" to refute the identical theory which is held by the reviewer, and ascribed by him to Dr. Bellamy—that sin entered into this "new made world, *in spite* of the utmost exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power!" and to prove that not a solitary sin either has or can take place, except by divine permission. He says,

"*Reason* teaches, that God never will, and never *can* voluntarily give up the government of his own world into the hands of his greatest enemy, the devil. And if the devil is one of God's creatures, as God himself has taught us in his word, he is so inferior to the God that made him, as to be in his hands, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, *absolutely at his control; unable by power or policy to bring any thing to pass but by the permission of the great God;* who from heaven hath declared, saying, *My* counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—"How then could the devil seduce our first parents, and break up God's original plan, and ruin his new made world *in spite of the utmost exertions of infinite wisdom and almighty power!*"

"The whole tenor of *divine revelation* leads us to believe, that the providence of God extends to all things which come to pass. If the

devil *or wicked men* were not under the divine control, we should have reason *to fear* them, but our Saviour assures us they cannot hurt an hair of our heads *without God's permission*, whose providence extends even to the very sparrows."

"But if the providence of God extends to the *lesser*, how much more to the *greater* concerns of the intellectual system. If it extends to *the sinful actions of men* in this fallen world, which are comparatively of little consequence; *much more to the original introduction of sin into the moral system;* which was an affair, strictly speaking, of infinite consequence."—"So that we may have the greatest assurance, that ever since the creation, *not one evil thing has come to pass*, but under the eye of the OMNISCIENT—*determined, permitted, and overruled by infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude.* Do you believe this, my friend?"—*Bellamy's Works*, vol. ii. pp. 177–180.

He thus entered on this notice of the universality of God's "providential government," for the express and sole purpose of proving what was "the grand topic of" the "controversy" "in which he was engaged," that "not one evil thing has come to pass," except by the wise and righteous "*permission*" of "the absolute governor of the world."

If there are any passages in which he can be regarded as reasoning respecting "the extent of God's decrees," they must be such as the following.

"Were there no particular instance in which we could *see the wisdom of God in the permission of sin*, yet from the perfections of the divine nature alone, we have such full evidence that he must always act in the wisest and best manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it.

"In the days of eternity, long before the foundation of the world this system now in existence, and this plan which now takes place, and all other possible systems, and all other possible plans, more in number perhaps than the very sands on the sea-shore, all equally lay open to the divine view, *and one as easy* to Almightiness as another. He had his choice. He had none to please but himself; beside him

there was no being. He had a perfectly good taste, and nothing to bias his judgment, and was infinite in wisdom. *This he chose:* and this of all possible systems, *therefore*, was the best, infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude being judges." p. 35.

In this passage, however, and others of similar import, his object is not to prove nor "defend the *general* doctrine of the universality of the divine decrees," but solely to demonstrate, from God's having *chosen* this "system now in existence," and "from the perfections of the divine nature," "*that he must act in the wisest and best manner*" "*in the permission of sin.*" So far, however, was he from making a defence of the "*general* doctrine of the universality of the divine decrees," the great theme of his discussion, that he expressly disclaimed the intention, and denied the necessity of any disputation on the subject, in order to such a vindication of the "divine conduct," as was the object of his argument. He says, in the preface to the "Vindication,"

"If the divine *conduct* toward the intellectual system can be *vindicated*, there will be no room for any *dispute* about his *decrees*. If God always *does* what is *best* for him to do, his *decreeing* from eternity to do so, cannot be objected against, unless *we can* suppose it to be *wrong* for God to *determine* upon a *conduct* in all respects *right*." "The *whole* of the divine conduct toward *intelligent* beings, after they are brought into existence, may be arranged under these two general heads, 1st, what he *does:* 2d, what he *forbears to do.*" "If he always has a good *reason* for doing what he does, and for forbearing what he forbears, then his *whole conduct*, as comprehending both, is *justifiable.*

"To vindicate THE CONDUCT of the Holy One of Israel, was *the design of my sermons on the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.*" p. 121.

If any additional proof of the truth of these representations can be necessary, it is furnished by the statement which

he gives at its introduction, of the subject and design of his argument.

The "doctrine" which he offered as the ground of the discussion is, that "a sight of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is very useful to promote holiness of heart and life;" and he adds, that that being "plain and evident," he "shall *only* attempt to show, *first*, what we are to understand by God's *permitting* sin; and *secondly*, the *wisdom* of God in the permission of sin; and then *conclude* with a practical improvement." The first of these topics occupies less than a single page. The remainder of the discussion, extending through more than one hundred and seventy, is devoted directly and exclusively to the proof of God's "wisdom in the permission of sin."

"The hypothesis" of the reviewer respecting "the nature and object of the discussion in which he was engaged," by which it "is easily accounted for," "that a man of Dr. Bellamy's acuteness and force of mind, should have reasoned, in different parts of his treatise, on different and inconsistent hypotheses," is thus clearly "a wholly gratuitous and unauthorized assumption." No statement of the nature and object of his argument, that should exhibit any topic as its theme, to which any allusion whatever occurs in the course of "the discussion," could possibly have been made, more utterly aside from facts, nor more distantly removed from the semblance of truth. He might as well have exhibited the divine omnipotence, omniscience, or rectitude, as "the grand topic" of "the controversy;" the divinity of the Saviour, the doctrine of original sin, of atonement, or a "judgment to come;"—topics, to which at least as much space is devoted, as to the "extent," either "of God's de-

crees," or "providential government," and that are as frequently made the basis of an argument.

This total misconception of so essential and palpable a fact, is certainly extraordinary; and in whatever manner it may be "easily accounted for," is adapted to beget a vehement doubt of the reviewer's competence to the task of criticism and commentary which he has taken on himself, on "the respectable theological writers of New-England," or of "affirming" theories and hypotheses, for the purpose of bringing back the clergy of that region to the apostolic method of preaching, and enabling them "to view the character and government of God" in a mode that shows them to be "free from embarrassment." If he could not succeed in discovering even "the grand topic" of the work, of which he has attempted an exposition, how can it be that he can be qualified to volunteer an explanation of the causes which led its author to reason, if such were the fact, "in different parts of his treatise, on different and inconsistent hypotheses?" If in eagerly searching through the "treatise", for every sentence, phrase, and word, by which he could sustain his hope of self-vindication, and exhibit Dr. Bellamy as "leaning" toward the theory which he attributes to him, he still totally failed of detecting the real "nature and object of the discussion," can it be that he is competent to affirm with so much confidence that his own theory is every where graven on its pages in such bold and indelible characters as he represents?

The next objection to the reviewer's statement is, that even were the fact as he has represented, it would still remain as "singular" and inexplicable as before, that Dr. Bellamy "should have reasoned" on such "different and inconsistent hypotheses." "He was called upon," he says, "to defend

the *general* doctrine of the universality of the divine decrees and providential government. He was not, therefore, *led* by the *nature of the discussion*, to propound any *single theory*, which might obviate *all* the objections alleged." But why should "different and inconsistent hypotheses" be any more necessary, or why should they more "naturally occur," in obviating objections to "the general doctrine of the divine decrees and providential government," than in vindicating "the wisdom of God in the permission of sin?" Are "different and inconsistent hypotheses" actually requisite to answer "all objections," either to the "general doctrine of the divine decrees and providential government," or to "the conduct of God in permitting" his creatures to transgress? Are those decrees or that government any less "just and true" than are the "ways" of the King of saints? Do the truths of revelation itself need the aid of error and inconsistency, in order to their support and vindication? If not, then it is far from being easy to see how it "would naturally occur," "that a man of acuteness and force of mind" should resort to their instrumentality, to defend any general or particular doctrine of revelation; and to attempt to account for it by such an hypothesis, is not merely to traduce Dr. Bellamy, in place of vindicating him, but is to impeach likewise the wisdom and rectitude of the Creator.

But it seems there were those at that period, "who maintained that *all* existing theories on the subject, *united*, could never vindicate the character of God, if the existence of sin was embraced within his eternal purposes;" and it was "against those" that "he aimed to defend the general doctrine." According to this, then, "the objection which he had to encounter," instead of being directed against either a "general doctrine" of the scriptures, or the theory itself

of Dr. B. was aimed solely at a supposititious mixture of "all the existing theories on the subject." It merely affirmed, that if "all" those theories—false as well as true, self-contradictory as well as those which were irreconcilable with one another —were "*united*," they "could never vindicate the character of God, *if the existence of sin* was embraced within his eternal purposes;"—a safe position certainly, as at least one of those theories expressly denied that "his eternal purposes" embraced "the existence of sin." And it may doubtless be affirmed universally, that where truth is grossly adulterated, or essentially lost by intermixture with palpable and fundamental error, the unnatural *mass* produced by the process, cannot "vindicate the character of God." But how could it result from that, that different and inconsistent hypotheses could be necessary either to vindicate the truth, or overthrow the errors, which that mixture might contain? It might truly "strike readers as singular," and need to be "accounted for," had "a man of Dr. Bellamy's acuteness and force of mind," undertaken so ridiculous a task as to beat down such an objection, and maintain its converse; or taken any notice whatever of one that professedly aimed neither at his particular theory, nor at a doctrine of scripture, but only at what was admitted to be a "groundless assumption." He, however, never attempted to show "that all the existing theories on the subject united, could vindicate the character of God," nor dreamed of so preposterous an enterprise, but simply aimed, on the basis of his own theory, "to vindicate the conduct of the Holy One of Israel in the permission of sin."

At length, however, the reviewer closes his apology for the alleged inconsistency of Dr. Bellamy, by intimating that no surprise ought in fact to be felt, "that a man of

acuteness and force of mind should reason" "on hypotheses" wholly inconsistent and subversive of each other; especially when he feels "the pressure of new objections," and "his mind is intently fixed on their most effectual refutation."

"It is not surprising, *therefore*, that in one course of reasoning to prove the perfection of God's universal government, he should reason upon one hypothesis, and yet when the subject was presented under entirely another aspect, or when by the pressure of new objections, his mind was intently fixed on their most effectual refutation, he should inadvertently found his answer on another hypothesis." p. 530.

In the judgment of this gentleman then, it seems it is not to be expected that even a man of "acuteness and force of mind," who takes upon himself the important task of vindicating the ways of God to man, or expounding the doctrines of his word, will, before venturing to offer his theories to the public, take care even to convince himself that he comprehends the subject of which he undertakes to treat, by tracing its various relations, marking the mutual bearings of the positions which he embraces, and thus proceeding on fixed and consistent principles. In place of that, it may be anticipated as a matter of course, that he will look at the subject in only one relation at one time, and "under entirely another aspect" at another, and will accordingly shift his hypothesis, as often as he varies "the aspect," or turns his "course of reasoning." Far less is it to be expected that he will adhere to any certain and consistent principles, when urged by "the pressure of new objections," and make it his aim to ascertain and demonstrate the truth, whether it support, or subvert his own scheme. On the contrary, it may be taken for granted, that he will intently

fix his mind on "*their* most effectual refutation," whether they are legitimate or not, and adopt whatever hypothesis, however subversive it may be of his own system, and resort to whatever expedient can promise to involve his adversary in embarrassment, and yield to himself an appearance of triumph.

However much the reviewer may have failed in expressing himself perspicuously on other topics, it cannot be denied that he has spoken intelligibly in this instance, and given his readers a sufficient clue to the principles on which he imagines controversies will, as a matter of course, be conducted, and on which he is accustomed to conduct them himself. A variety of significant proofs and illustrations of it, are furnished by his discussions in reference to "the respectable theological writers of New-England." A single one will suffice, founded like his argument in the present instance on the acuteness and mental force of the author, whose sentiments he was endeavoring to expound. "The pressure of objections" here, led him, as we have seen, to show that "though or notwithstanding" Dr. Bellamy was a man of "acuteness and force of mind," yet it "would naturally occur," and "is easily accounted for," "that he should reason in different parts of his treatise, on different and inconsistent hypotheses," and assumptions wholly "gratuitous," and subversive alike of his own theory, and the truth at large. In his "Inquiry," however, "into the nature of sin, as exhibited in Dr. Dwight's Theology," "the objection which he had then to encounter," led him to employ that writer's distinction as a theologian, to demonstrate the utter improbability of his having fallen into "self-contradiction" and "absurdity." Commencing with the assertion that Dr. Dwight had in "explicit declarations,"

affirmed in accordance with the reviewer's theory, " that all sin consists in *preference*," he argued from his " acuteness and force of mind," that the " charges of absurdity and inconsistency" implied in the supposition that he had taught the contradictory doctrine, " that all sin does *not* consist in preference or action," must be totally " groundless" and unjust. That Dr. Dwight had *apparently* reasoned on the latter hypothesis, he could not deny, but " mere *verbal* incongruities are not of course proof of real contradiction *in meaning*;" and " if you interpret his language *to the letter*, you must convict him of the flagrant absurdity of saying, that the cause of all moral excellence, is itself moral excellence,"—the identical imputation however which this gentleman's construction of his language, not the other involved—"*an absurdity not to be charged to such a writer on slight grounds.*" " To vindicate him," therefore, " not only from the imputation of teaching the doctrine of physical depravity, but also from the most palpable self-contradiction, which must otherwise be charged upon" him, he resorted to " the true usus loquendi," which solved the difficulty, by interpreting the language and arguments of Dr. Dwight, not with any reference to their proper meaning, and the end for which he used them, but solely according to the nature of the subject, as known and understood by the reviewer himself! But " the subject" of " acuteness and force of mind," then " presented itself" to the reviewer " under entirely another aspect," and " his mind was intently fixed on the most effectual refutation" of the charge of having departed " in any article of doctrinal belief from his revered instructor in theology, the former president of the college."

But however he may think it proper for himself to adopt

such expedients to escape "the pressure" of the "new objections" with which his "different and inconsistent hypotheses" have become perplexed, the public will scarcely feel indebted to him for attempting to demonstrate that they are common to himself, with theological writers at large, and especially for claiming for all the grosser errors and inconsistencies that characterize his speculations, the sanction of exact precedents in the volumes of Dr. Dwight, Dr. Bellamy, and President Edwards.

He seems, from the difficulty he has experienced in accomplishing an "effectual refutation" of the objections with which his theories have become embarrassed, to have got to feel a quick sympathy with those whom he deems to have halted like himself in their metaphysics, and to be endeavoring to discover with what great men he can claim such a companionship in "self-contradiction." It is to this feeling not improbably that we are indebted for the flourish of sentiment with which he closes his exposition of Dr. Bellamy's "treatise."

"We take leave of this treatise with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret;—pleasure to find Dr. Bellamy meeting the enemies of divine sovereignty on that vantage ground, which we think ought never to be relinquished; regret that in any instance he should yield it to his opponents, and be thus driven to adopt a theory which made him inconsistent with himself. But the circumstances under which he wrote, fully explain the fact. *The men* who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, *are in our view the only exceptions in regard to inadvertencies of this kind.* The imputation is no disparagement to Dr. Bellamy's mental power, when compared with that of others of the first order of intellect, and in view of the circumstances of the case amounts to nothing more than a denial of an infallibility which none can claim. If an exemption from even more palpable inconsistencies is essential to intellectual greatness, then must all our ad-

miration of the gigantic strength of Bacon, Locke, Berkley, and others, be changed into lamentation over the weakness of the human intellect. The most that can be said of the greatest men, is, that while aiming to establish some great and leading truth, they have been successful and triumphant; and though not without falling into occasional incongruities through inadvertence, they deserve the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments."—pp. 539–540.

It has hitherto been regarded as a disparagement to the talents, and a formidable obstacle to the usefulness of men, to reason on loose, false, and contradictory principles, especially if discussing the great questions of theology, or attempting to expound the volume of inspiration; and as no light evil, to overlook, undermine, or deny even inadvertently, the great truths of revelation; and history has abundantly shown, that no writers are more dangerous to the gospel and mischievous to the church, than vain and daring theorizers, who, intent on nothing else than the support of their baseless hypotheses, resort to whatever expedients can give currency to their reasonings, and who accordingly supplant the gospel and obstruct the peace and prosperity of the church, just in proportion to their success. "Things" however it seems "are changed." To yield positions "to the enemies of divine sovereignty" "which ought never to be relinquished," adopt theories that circumvent essential truths, introduce "anti-apostolic methods of preaching," and involve "the character and government of God" in "embarrassment," are only "inadvertencies," from which none are "exceptions," and evils that are "necessarily incidental to the best system." "The imputation" of them is "no disparagement" to "the first order of intellect." It is only falling short of inspiration. "The men

who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, are in our view the only exceptions *in regard*" to them. A consolatory consideration, doubtless, to one who finds his own history thickly strewn with these inconsistencies. Some doubtfulness however may be felt, of the appropriateness of such doctrines for the ear of theological students; and some queries may need to be settled in regard to the extent to which this apology for fundamental or dangerous theological error is to be carried, before it can meet with a safe acquiescence. Is its broad mantle to stretch only over the regions of nominal orthodoxy, or are "Arminian and Unitarian writers" also to enjoy the privilege of shielding their errors beneath its folds? Is it not as adequate an extenuation of the false doctrines of Dr. Bellamy's "opponents," as of the alleged inconsistencies of Dr. Bellamy himself? as ample an apology for the errors of Dr. Taylor of Norwich, respecting moral agency, as for those of President Edwards of Northampton, respecting imputation?

"The most," he proceeds, "that can be said of the greatest men, is, that while aiming to establish some great and leading truth, they have been successful and triumphant." And that doubtless is to say enough; but it is a very different saying from any that he has chosen to utter in respect to Dr. Bellamy or any others, even "of the first order of intellect." To be "successful and triumphant" "while aiming to establish some great and leading truth," is a very different thing from yielding "the vantage ground" of truth to "the enemies of divine sovereignty," and reasoning on "gratuitous and unauthorized assumptions," wholly subversive alike of each other, and the gospel of God. How much commendation, however, he is in

fact willing the greatest men should enjoy, he gives us again to understand in the conclusion of the sentence. "And though not without falling into occasional incongruities, through inadvertence, they deserve the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments;" —"the praise," in other words, involved in the sweeping asseveration, that there are no exceptions among even those of "the first order of intellect," from as gross inconsistencies, and fundamental errors, as he has found it necessary to ascribe to Dr. Bellamy, in order to reduce him to a resemblance to himself.

Having thus noticed the chief features of the theory held by the reviewer and ascribed by him to Dr. Bellamy, the mode in which he represents it as taught in the "treatise," and the causes to which he attributes the occasional deviations from it, into which he regards Dr. Bellamy as having fallen "through inadvertence;" it remains to examine the statements and reasonings, to which he has assigned the place of proof, that Dr. Bellamy taught the theory which he imputes to him with so much confidence. The question at issue, is not at all, it will be borne in mind, whether the views advanced by Dr. Bellamy, are scriptural or correct, or not; but solely whether he actually inculcated the theory which the reviewer ascribes to him. To sustain his allegation, he must at least demonstrate, that Dr. Bellamy held that "God's plan" "does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God does"; that the reason that sin is suffered to take place, is solely, that God is physically incompetent to prevent it; and that he actually carries his efforts at its prevention to the utmost extent to which infinite power and wisdom are adequate. His first argument is presented in the following passage:

"In proof that Dr. Bellamy has decisively countenanced the hypothesis, that the *system* or *plan* which God has adopted (in distinction from the *sin* which is its *consequence*) is the necessary means of the greatest good, we observe,

"1. He introduces the subject of discussion to his readers on the basis of this theory. In his preface he says,

"'I do not imagine mankind would ever have thought of disputing God's right to lay out a universal plan, had the plan appeared to them wise and good. We do not dispute our superior's right in time of war to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, although it is expected it will cost many a precious life, when on the whole we think the plan is wise and good.'"—p. 7.

"It will be conceded that Dr. Bellamy's design in this example, is to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God's 'universal plan.' The question is, how does he illustrate this? Is it on the theory or supposition that the *evil* is the necessary means of the greatest good, or on the supposition, that this evil is (in respect to divine prevention) incidental to the *plan* which is the necessary means of the greatest good? We appeal to the example. Does the commander in adopting his plan of a campaign, adopt it because the *loss* of so many valuable lives is the necessary means of the victory; or because the plan itself, to which such loss is incidental, is the necessary means of this end? Surely he who would not adopt the *same plan*, though it involved no such calamity, would deserve little credit either for his wisdom or his goodness. What person ever supposed that the *destruction of life*, is the reason, or any *part* of the reason, why a benevolent leader of an army adopts his plan of operations? Here then in introducing the subject to his readers, Dr. Bellamy, if language can do it, vindicates the government of God in view of existing evil, on the theory, that 'the evil (in respect to divine prevention) is *incidental* to the best plan.' His illustration is totally inapposite, if he did not design it to show, that the existing *system* in distinction from the *evil* which is its consequence, is preferable to any other, which could have been adopted."—pp. 533, 534.

If the truth and force of this argument are to be determined by the assurance with which its conclusion is affirmed,

the position which it is its object to establish, is doubtless quite indisputable. "Here then," he says, "Dr. Bellamy, *if language can do it*, vindicates the government of God, in view of existing evil, on *the theory* that 'the evil (in respect to divine prevention) is *incidental* to the best plan,'" and that "his illustration is totally inapposite, *if he did not design* to show that *the existing system, in distinction from the evil which is its consequence*, is preferable to any other which could have been adopted." Several difficulties, however, need to be solved, before these asseverations can safely receive our assent.

In the first place, the reviewer exhibits Dr. Bellamy's *preface* to the Sermons, written at the time of their publication, not of their composition, and neither containing any branch of his reasoning, nor any formal statement of his theory, as an introduction of "*the subject of discussion* to his readers on the basis" of the reviewer's theory, and represents him as uttering the passage which he quotes, for the purpose of illustrating "the wisdom and goodness" of that theory. His preface however obviously forms no such introduction, but is employed in stating and tracing to their results, some "mistaken notions and apprehensions," that were extensively entertained at that period, which it was the "chief design" of the sermons "to rectify." The introduction and statement of "the subject of the discussion to his readers," was made in its proper place, at the commencement of the first sermon, in the following language.

"*Doctrine.* A sight of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is very useful to promote holiness of heart and life."—"The truth of the doctrine being plain and evident, I shall only attempt to show, 1st, What we are to understand by God's *permitting* sin; 2d, The *wisdom* of God in the permission of sin; and then, 3d, conclude with

a practical improvement."—"God's permitting sin, consists merely in not hindering it. He saw that Joseph's brethren, considering their temper, and how they had their brother out in the field, and how that the Ishmaelitish merchants would soon come by, &c. would certainly sell him, unless he interposed to hinder it; and he could have hindered their selling as easily as he hindered their murdering him; but he did not; he let them take their course.

"And yet it is self-evident, God never permits sin in the character of an unconcerned spectator, as not caring how affairs go, but as having weighed all circumstances and consequences. Therefore, God never permits sin, but only when, on the whole, all things considered, he judges it best not to hinder it. And therefore, at whatever time God *forbears* to interpose to hinder the commission of any act of sin, he is not only justifiable in his conduct, but even commendable and praiseworthy; because he has chosen to act in the wisest and best manner. But this leads me to show *the wisdom* of God in the permission of sin." p. 11, 12.

These were the passages, obviously, which the reviewer should have presented to his readers, had it been his intention to give them a fair statement of the subject of Dr. Bellamy's sermons, and the great principles which lie at the foundation of his discussion. They were not suited, however, to his object. They neither contain nor sanction any one of the positions which he attempts to fasten on the "treatise," but on the contrary, either express or involve a specific denial of them all. Thus, Dr. Bellamy affirms, that God "could have hindered" "Joseph's brethren" from "selling, as easily as he hindered their murdering him;" thus denying, both that the reason that sin is suffered to take place, is that God is incapable of hindering it, and that, he actually carries his efforts at its prevention in every instance to the utmost extent of his power. He, moreover, *expressly affirms* the theory, which the reviewer represents him as teaching only "through inadvertence," and by becoming

"inconsistent with himself,"—that the sole reason that God does not hinder sin in any and every instance is, that "he judges it *best* not to hinder it;" in other words, that he can give birth to more good by permitting it, than by its prevention.

In the next place, his statement respecting Dr. Bellamy's "design in the example," which he quotes from the preface, does not, unhappily for his argument, enjoy any better correspondence with fact. He says, "it will be conceded that Dr. Bellamy's design in this example is, to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God's universal plan." In place of that, however, Dr. Bellamy's "design" in the passage was solely to express what he regarded as the reason that "mankind ever thought of disputing God's *right* to lay out a universal plan." "I do not imagine," he says, "mankind would ever have thought of disputing God's *right* to lay out a universal plan, *had the plan appeared to them wise and good;*" and adds, in confirmation of it, that "we do not dispute our superiors' *right*, in time of war, to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, although it is expected it will cost many a precious life, *when, on the whole, we think the plan is wise and good.*" His object thus was to show, that the reason that mankind dispute "God's right to lay out a universal plan" is, as he expresses himself in the following sentence, that they "*take for granted* that the present universal plan is *unwise and bad*, all things going wrong." That the passage does not *in fact*, therefore, present any illustration of the wisdom and goodness of God's universal plan, is as indisputably clear, as "language can" render it, and it is equally certain that the language and "example" are "totally inapposite," if it was "his design" to present by them any such "illus-

tration." The reviewer's argument, were it otherwise of any force, being thus built on a total misconstruction of the meaning and object of the passage, the conclusion which he draws from it with so much confidence, is consequently utterly without support.

But even were what he thus gratuitously assumes, "conceded, that Dr. Bellamy's design in this example is to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God's universal plan," it could neither sustain his argument nor conclusion, but would involve the total subversion of each; as they are founded on the additional and equally false assumption, that "God's universal plan" is not in verity "a *universal plan*," embracing "whatsoever comes to pass," "sin not excepted," "but consists only of what God *does*," "in distinction from the *evil* which is its consequence." That "a universal plan" must include all events that transpire—the consequences of "what God does," as well as the acts or immediate effects of his agency, the language itself sufficiently shows; and that that was the meaning with which Dr. Bellamy employed the phrase, is indisputable from the sentences which precede and follow the reviewer's quotations, as well as from every other passage in his sermons in which the terms occur. He says in the former of these sentences, "I suppose it is generally taken for granted, that it had been much better, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown; and looked upon one of the most unaccountable things, that God ever suffered affairs in his world to take such a course as they have;"—and in the other, "but while mankind take for granted that *the present universal plan* is unwise and bad, all things going wrong, they can by no means believe that from eternal ages, it was contrived by infinite wisdom and goodness." "That the present universal plan" includes

"sin and misery," is thus seen from the fact that that is alleged as the reason "that mankind take for granted" that it "is unwise and bad, all things going wrong." To concede, therefore, to the reviewer, "that Dr. Bellamy's design, in this example," is what he here claims, instead of yielding him any aid, is utterly to disjoin his premise from his argument and conclusion, and not only render them "inapposite" and incompatible, but place them in direct and total opposition to each other; for the express and sole object of his reasoning is, to disprove that concession, and show, "if language can do it," that Dr. Bellamy's design was, *not* "to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God's *universal plan*," including "sin as an integral part of it," as well as "what God does," but of a plan "that differs *toto cœlo*" from that, and "only consists of what God *does*," "*in distinction from the evil*, which is its consequence;" in other words, of a *partial*, in place of "a universal plan:" and it is this which the reviewer affirms with such dauntless assurance, "if language can do it," Dr. Bellamy has done.

He has not erred, however, in these representations and reasonings merely; but if it was his conscientious aim to exhibit the views of Dr. Bellamy, without disguise or distortion, he was as singularly unfortunate in his selection of sentences for that purpose, from the preface, as in his assumptions and arguments respecting their object and meaning. Their relations to what precedes and follows, may be seen from the passage at large.

"Great offence hath been taken at the answer the Assembly of Divines have given to this question, *What are the decrees of God?* Answer.—The decrees of God are *his eternal purpose*, according to *the counsel of his own will*, whereby, *for his own glory*, he hath *foreordained whatsoever comes to pass*. Often hath it been said, 'if

God foreordained *whatsoever* comes to pass, then he foreordained sin;' as though it were evidently the greatest absurdity in nature, to suppose that God *really thought it best* in the whole, that sin ever should exist in the world he had made. And I suppose it is generally taken for granted, that it had been much better if sin and misery had been for ever unknown; and looked upon one of the most unaccountable things that God ever suffered affairs in this world to take such a course as they have. I do not imagine that mankind would ever have thought of disputing God's right to lay out a universal plan, had the plan appeared to them wise and good. We do not dispute our superior's right in time of war, to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, although it is expected it will cost many a precious life, when, on the whole, we think the plan is wise and good. But while mankind take for granted that the present universal plan is unwise and bad, all things going wrong, they can by no means believe that from eternal ages it was contrived by infinite wisdom and goodness; but are under a necessity to suppose that they have taken a different course from what God intended, and turned out contrary to his original design and expectation; and that he is really disappointed and grieved. And doubtless, if God is disappointed and grieved, all the inhabitants of heaven are very sorry too, so that the grief and sorrow are universal in the world above; and if it is universal there, it may well be universal here."—" A chief design of the following sermons is to rectify these mistaken notions and apprehensions."—p. 7, 8.

It is thus seen from the connexion in which the reviewer's quotation occurs, that the passage on which he founds his representation, that Dr. Bellamy introduces the subject of discussion to his readers, on the basis of the theory imputed to him by the reviewer, is not only without any semblance whatever of the meaning which he ascribes to it, but is immediately preceded and followed by others, that both indisputably demonstrate that that is not its meaning, and directly contradict nearly every principal point of the reviewer's theory. Thus the definition of the decrees of God, which Dr. Bellamy quotes with approbation, affirms, that

they are *his eternal purpose* according to *the counsel of his own will*, whereby, *for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass;* in other words, his eternal "*plan*," embracing every event that transpires, evil as well as good, and embracing it not because the exclusion of sin "is impossible to him in the nature of things," but "according to the counsel of his own *will*," and "for his own glory." But this—we have the reviewer's own asseveration for it,—"differs *toto cœlo*," from the theory which represents that God's plan "does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God *does*." Those who thus took offence at the definition of God's decrees, and offered as an objection to it, that, "then he foreordained sin," Dr. Bellamy proceeds in his next sentence, to ridicule for reasoning and objecting, "as though it were evidently the greatest absurdity in nature, to suppose that God really thought it best on the whole, that sin should ever exist in the world he had made;"—thus not only expressing in the strongest manner his utter disbelief and rejection of the reviewer's theory, but treating it as fitter, from its extreme weakness and absurdity, to be assailed with the shafts of irony, than sober argument. In the sentence which follows the reviewer's quotation, he represents that all those who suppose God did not really think it best on the whole that sin should ever exist in the world, and "take for granted that the present universal plan is unwise and bad, all things going wrong," "*are under a necessity*" on the one hand, *of denying that God's plan included sin and misery*, and accordingly of assuming on the other, *that things "have taken a different course from what God intended*, and turned out contrary to his original design and expectation,"—the identical denial and inference which constitute

two of the chief ingredients of the reviewer's own theory. These views, which he denominates "mistaken notions and apprehensions," traces to their legitimate and frightful results, and ridicules for their absurdity, he states in the last sentence I have quoted, it is "the chief design" of his "sermons to rectify." These facts, too certain to be denied with any safety, and too palpaple not to attract the notice of every eye, involve the reviewer in a degree of embarrassment, from which it is not easy to see in what manner he can successfully extricate himself. To *attempt* to verify his representations, were to insult the reason and rectitude of his readers, and set truth at once at open and final defiance. Did he then really "inadvertently" overlook every thing in Bellamy's preface, with the exception of the sentences which he made the basis of his argument, and offer his statement with respect to their design and import, with a clear and conscientious conviction of its incontrovertible truth? Can he expect, or even wish any of his readers of the least competence to weigh evidence, or judge of probabilities, to account for his misrepresentations by such a supposition? For how then could it have happened, that he should have felt himself authorized to utter such bold and sweeping asseverations without any knowledge of their truth, or inquiry after their accuracy? Or did he impartially scrutinize the whole preface, and find himself borne by the resistless force of evidence, to the conclusion respecting its object and meaning, which he has expressed in his argument? What then are the inferences to which he must expect his readers may find themselves constrained, in regard to his capability of apprehending the true import of Dr. Bellamy's "treatise," and competence to expound the great principles of his theory?

The reviewer however seems soon to have become weary of so circuitous a method of reaching his object, and resorts in his next argument, to the more expeditious process of his "true usus loquendi" which disperses at a breath every difficulty, by making the nature of the subject, as known or regarded by the reviewer, the sole standard by which the meaning itself of Dr. Bellamy's language and definitions is to be determined, as well as the object at which he aimed in his reasoning.

"2. Dr. Bellamy uniformly exhibits sin as taking place by God's "*permission.*" Now we ask, why is he always so careful to speak of it as "*permitted?*" Does the Almighty merely "*permit*" or only "*not hinder*" the existence of that which is really demanded by the supreme good of the universe? If the nature of sin is such as to render it essential to an object of such infinite magnitude; or if, *as some maintain, it is an integral part of the best system*, and on the whole advantageous rather than hurtful,—a good rather than an evil, why talk of its being only *permitted?* Is God honoured by being represented as merely *permitting* or not *hindering* the best means of the best end? Surely if sin is this means, instead of supposing simply that God could not *hinder* it, we ought to believe that he made obvious and special arrangements for its introduction into the universe, and that he is in the strict and proper sense the author of sin. The nature of the case requires this supposition. The honour of God and the good of the universe require it. But this is totally incompatible with the notion of mere permission.

"The phraseology, *permitting an evil*, or not *hindering* it, has by usage, a precise and definite import. It always implies a choice of *evils*, and supposes that the prevention of the permitted evil would involve a greater evil than would follow from its permission. This is the precise and only fact described by such language in analogous cases. Hence to talk of *permitting* an evil, or not *hindering* an evil, as a vindication of God's character, when that evil is admitted to be the necessary means of the greatest good," i. e. a good in *that* place, and not an evil, would be not only a strange expedient for the pur-

pose of vindication, but a totally unauthorized use of language. For example, it will be acknowledged that when sin has been committed, punishment, though a natural evil, is the necessary means of sustaining the authority of law, and thus of securing the greatest good. But who would speak of God's barely *permitting* punishment? The only proper mode of speaking in such a case is, to say he is the *cause* or *author* of the evil. Hence the adoption of this language by some writers, and its perfect propriety, in respect to sin, if their theory is true. This shows that no one can with the least propriety, speak of *permitting* an evil, while he views the evil as "the necessary means of the greatest good." The phrase is exclusively applied to cases in which the evil is *wholly* an evil; and in which the sole reason for not preventing it is, that its prevention would involve something *worse* than its permission. The inference, we think, is unavoidable, that at times certainly, and with good reason, Dr. B. regarded sin, not as 'the necessary means of the greatest good,' 'but as a baleful evil, *incident* to the best system."—p. 534, 535.

It is thus seen, that in literal accordance with his rule, the reviewer does not pretend in his argument to produce a solitary sentence or syllable in which Dr. Bellamy expresses, either directly or by implication, what he ascribes to him, nor ventures, fearless as he is in asseveration, to assert that any intimation of the kind can be found in what Dr. Bellamy advances on the subject of "permission";—a course, nevertheless, that could scarcely have been expected were there any thing in what Dr. Bellamy alleges on that topic, that could clearly make the inference unavoidable, that he did not regard sin as "the necessary means of the greatest good," or be made, with any plausibility, the instrument of sustaining that representation. The exhibition of passages of that kind, had any been found, could not at all events have weakened the reviewer's argument, if it could not, in his judgment, have added any thing to its strength.

He founds his unavoidable inference, however, not at all

even in pretence, on any thing that Dr. Bellamy affirms, or has intimated, but solely and professedly on what, in his judgment, Dr. Bellamy *ought* to have held and taught; and this on a subject, not that he had passed in silence, or left in uncertainty, but on which his views are expressed with the utmost formality and distinctness.

It is not the most exceptionable feature of these representations, however, that they are offered without any authority whatever from the statements of Dr. Bellamy. Unhappily they bear on their very front, an open contradiction to the plainest and most unequivocal expressions of his sentiments on the subject. The reviewer's statement is, that "to talk of *permitting* an evil, or not *hindering* an evil, as a vindication of God's character, when that evil is admitted to be the necessary means of the greatest good," "would be" "a totally unauthorized use of language;" and thence—admitting that "Dr. Bellamy uniformly exhibits sin as taking place by God's permission,"—he draws his "unavoidable" "inference," that "at times certainly," he did not regard sin as "the necessary means of the greatest good." The question then is, did Dr. Bellamy, while he "uniformly exhibits sin as taking place by God's permission," likewise hold and teach, that sin is "the necessary means of the greatest good"—a mere problem of fact it will be recollected; having no connexion whatever with the question, whether his views were correct or not. But that this is the fact, the reviewer himself admits and asserts, and protests that he is "perfectly willing that it should have all the weight to which it is entitled, after a full view of facts;" and had he not admitted it, it could not have escaped the notice of any one who had gained the slightest glimpse of the nature and object of the "treatise."

The very "design" of his Sermons was "to rectify" the "mistaken apprehension," that "it had been much better if sin and misery had been forever unknown;" and to show "how there may be eternally more holiness and happiness" than if they had never existed in the world. He says, in his introductory definitions, "God never permits sin, but only when on the whole all things considered, he judges it *best* not to hinder it;" and on a subsequent page, "the question is, what" in fact "is wisest and best for God to do? To interpose and prevent sin in all cases; or else in some cases to suffer his creatures to sin? If God can promote the glory of God, and good of the system, *to better advantage* by the permission of sin, than by hindering it, it is *best* on the whole for him to permit it:" and again,

"Did God act wisely in this affair, or did he not? He had some end in view, or no end. Not no end; for that would reflect upon his wisdom. If some end, it was a good end, or a bad one. Not a bad one; for he is a most perfect being. Therefore it must be a good one. *That is*, when God determined to permit sin, upon a full view of the whole affair, he knew it was wisest and best to permit it; *i. e.* he knew that plan in which so much sin and misery should take place, *would be better on the whole*, than a plan in which sin and misery should for ever be effectually prevented by his constant interposition."--pp. 131, 132.

These views it need scarcely be remarked, lie at the very basis of Dr. Bellamy's theory, are held forth by him in the boldest prominence at every step of his progress, and sustained in eminent consistency, and are more essential than any others advanced by him, to give to his discussion even the least semblance of any rational object, or intelligible meaning. What were it but the starkest nonsense, to undertake to illustrate the *wisdom* of God in the permission of

sin, if it is held and admitted at the outset, that no more good can be secured by its permission, than by its hindrance; in other words, that there can be no wisdom in its permission? In place of such wretched inconsistencies, Dr. Bellamy in the most distinct and formal manner, exhibits it as the reason that "God determined to permit sin," "that he knew that plan in which so much sin and misery should take place, *would be better on the whole*, than a plan, in which sin and misery should for ever be effectually prevented by his constant interposition;" and it is on that ground alone that he founded his attempt to vindicate the divine wisdom in the permission of sin. There is not a solitary statement, illustration, nor argument, in his whole discussion, in which this fundamental position is not either expressed, or assumed; nor that is not indebted to it for every particle it can claim of relationship to his object, or intelligible significancy. And yet in the face of this fact, blazoned as it is on every page of the "treatise," and known, admitted, and asserted by the reviewer himself, he has, in the argument under consideration, laid it down as a self-evident axiom, that "*to talk of permitting an evil*, or not *hindering an evil, as a vindication of God's character*, when that evil is admitted to be the necessary means of the greatest good," is a "*totally* unauthorized use of language;" and thence announced it to his readers, and called on them to assent to it as an "unavoidable" "inference," from the fact that "Dr. Bellamy uniformly exhibits sin as taking place by God's permission," that "at times certainly" he did not regard it as the necessary means of the greatest good." This is to "solve the difficulty" by "the true usus loquendi."

But the reviewer is as wide of fact, unhappily in his de-

finitions of the phrases "permitting" or "not hindering" sin, as in his reasoning from his criticisms. The ground of the use of that phraseology undoubtedly is, first, that the beings who transgress are regarded, in "the strict and proper sense," as the authors of their sin; next, that their sin is a violation of the divine command; and finally, that God is regarded as perfectly able, if he pleases, to hinder them from transgression. Neither its being used, nor its propriety, has any dependence whatever on the question, whether sin is to be made the occasion of securing the greatest sum of good. It is *the wisdom* of its being permitted, not the fact itself, with which that inquiry is concerned. It were absurd indeed, to talk of God's permitting sin, if he were either, "in the strict and proper sense, the author" of it, or if—as the reviewer holds—he were not able to hinder its commission.

When, therefore, the reviewer asks, "why" was Dr. Bellamy "always so careful to speak of it as 'permitted'?" the answer is, becase he regarded the transgressors themselves as the authors of their sin; and because—in contradiction to what the reviewer represents—he held that God is able, whenever he pleases, to hinder his creatures from transgression. The task accordingly, to which the reviewer's vindication of himself on this point, required him to direct his whole effort, was, to show why the fact that "Dr. Bellamy uniformly exhibits sin as taking place by God's permission," does not make "the inference unavoidable," that he did not hold the doctrine imputed to him, that God is unable in every, or any instance, to prevent his creatures from that sin.

These, however, are not the only exceptionable representations, which the reviewer has advanced in this argu-

ment. He affirms that "the nature of the case," the "honor of God, and the good of the universe, require" the "supposition"—if there is any thing, "the existence" of "which is really demanded by the supreme good of the universe," and is "the best means of the best end,"—that "God is, in the strict and proper sense, the author" of it. "Surely," he says, "if sin *is* this means, instead of supposing simply that God would not *hinder* it, we ought to believe that he made obvious and special arrangements for its introduction into the universe, and that he is in the strict and proper sense the author of sin. The nature of the case requires this supposition. The honor of God and the good of the universe require it." But if these positions are correct, they demonstrate beyond disputation, that God "is in the strict and proper sense the author" of all the holiness of his creatures; for that, it is on all hands admitted and certainly by the reviewer, "is really demanded by the supreme good of the universe," and is "the best means of the best end." God then is the efficient cause of all the holiness of creatures, as truly as he is the father of the rain, and begets the drops of the dew, and "the *only proper* mode of *speaking* in such a case is, to say *he* is the cause or author" of it. "Hence the adoption of this language by some writers and its perfect propriety, in respect to" holiness, "if their theory is true."

"If this is not maintaining the doctrine that God is the author" of holiness, "in its most obnoxious form; if it is not denying that moral agents *as such* possess *natural* ability to act either right or wrong; if it is not annihilating moral agency and moral action, and supposing men to be mere passive recipients of what by a strange misnomer is called *moral action*, we can conceive of no mode of dependence on God which would imply these things. That a being should do right

when he cannot but do it, or when he cannot do wrong, is a solecism. That moral agents *as such*—moral agents in their very nature AS *moral agents*, should be *entirely* dependent on some ab extra agency for right and wrong moral action, is another solecism. To say that it must be so in the nature of things, is to say that *God* is not a free moral agent, and that he has not made, and cannot make creatures, in his own image."—p. 565

If the reviewer's assumptions, then, and arguments in these passages, are of any truth, and his method of reasoning respecting Dr. Bellamy's doctrines, at all vindicable, they prove beyond denial, that he holds the dogma which he here so vehemently reprobates, that God "is in the strict and proper sense, the author" of at least all obedient moral actions. But doubtless when he penned this latter passage, "the subject was presented under entirely another aspect," and "his mind was intently fixed on the most effectual refutation" of his opponent. Which "punishment," however, will he deem it best on the whole to "permit,"—that his readers should regard him as having proceeded on "a groundless assumption," in his argument respecting Dr. Bellamy; or as having merely overthrown himself, in his fancied triumph over Dr. Woods? But it is perhaps presumptuous to imagine that either of these evils is "necessarily incidental" to his system. "Under the pressure of new objections" he may possibly succeed in discovering that in each of these instances, "he was simply reasoning with his opponents on their own principles; the argument was *ex concessis*," and the assumption that any of his postulates, proofs, or conclusions, are really expressive of views which *he* entertains, is "utterly unfounded in fact."

The object of his next argument is, to demonstrate that "God's plan," "according to Dr. Bellamy, does not include

sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God does." He says,

"3. We refer to his statement of the question. He says, 'The grand point of difference is precisely this: I believe that the infinitely holy and wise God, in every part of his conduct relative to the intellectual system, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do; most for his glory and the good of the system, in the whole; and therefore that God's present plan is of all possible plans the best; most for his glory and the good of the system."—p. 127. Now the reader will observe, that this is 'the grand point in controversy *exactly* stated.' And what is it? Why, it respects simply the perfection of God's *plan*; and this plan, according to Dr. Bellamy, does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God *does*."—p. 535.

This representation is not the most happily adapted to raise our estimate of the reviewer's knowledge of the subject, on which he speaks so confidently, nor add strength to our respect for his testimony. Its extreme distance from all truth, so far as the passage on which it is founded is concerned, cannot need to be demonstrated, as not the slightest trace exists in it, of an intimation that "God's plan does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God does;" nor a shade of any thing, either expressed or implied, that can give the least air of probability to such a representation. Its equal distance from all accuracy, as it respects the "treatise" at large, is seen from what has been already said on the subject, and could not possibly have escaped the notice of the reviewer himself had he glanced his eye even through the paragraph, from which he made his quotation, or over either the preceding, the following, or almost any page indeed, either of the sermons or the vindication. To form an accurate judgment of the character of his asseveration, the relation must be seen, of the passage

which he quotes, with what goes before, and succeeds it. It occurs in the vindication of the sermons, from objections urged against them, in "a pamphlet entitled an Attempt," and is immediately preceded by an enumeration of "several particulars, in regard to which Dr. Bellamy and his opponent were "agreed." He says,

"We agree, if God had pleased, he could have hindered the existence of sin, and caused misery to have been for ever unknown in his dominions, with as much ease as to have suffered things to have taken their present course. We agree, that God knew with infallible certainty, that things would take their present course, and issue as they will issue, in the eternal ruin of millions, unless he himself should interpose and effectually hinder it. We agree, that God did, as it were, stand by, and take a perfect view of the whole chain of events, in which his honour and the good of creation were infinitely interested; and in a full view, and under a most lively sense of the whole, *did deliberately forbear to interpose effectually to hinder the introduction of sin into his world, when he could have hindered it as easily as not.*" p. 126.

Having thus repeated these and other particulars, which he "had asserted" in the sermons, and none of which had his opponent "denied," he then presents "the grand point in controversy" between them, "exactly stated."

"The grand point of difference is precisely this: '*I* believe that the infinitely holy and wise God, in every part of his conduct, relative to the intellectual system, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do; most for his glory and the good of the system, in the whole; and therefore, that God's present plan is of all possible plans the best; most for his glory and the good of the system.' On the contrary, the author of the *Attempt* believes, that 'God is not obliged to do, and that in fact he does not do, that which is most for his own glory, or most for the good of the system; and is fully persuaded, that the present plan is so far from being the best, that it had been infinitely more for the glory of God and the good of the system, if sin had never happened.' 'And he attempts to prove at large, by nine

arguments, that it had been much better, on the whole, more for God's glory, and the general good of the system, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown.' So that this is the fundamental and most essential point of difference, and that on which the whole controversy between him and me turns, viz. *whether the whole and every part of the divine conduct be agreeable to infinite wisdom;*—or in other words, whether God *means*, in the whole and every part of his conduct, to do that which he knows to be for the best, most for his own glory, and the good of the system, on the whole. For we both agree, that God always *knows* what is best, and never acts under mistake. So that the only question really is, whether God always *means* to do what he *knows* to be for the best, on the whole? For if he does, the grand point is proved. The *wisdom of God, in the permission of sin, is demonstrated.*"—p. 127, 128.

From the passage at large, as well as from that part of it to which the reviewer restricted his quotation, it is thus seen with the clearest certainty, that the grand point of difference between Dr. Bellamy and his opponent, had no reference whatever—as the reviewer would have his readers believe—to the *extent* of "God's plan," or to the question whether it included or excluded sin, but related solely to the *wisdom* of what God does *in the permission of sin;* or the superiority of his present plan, including "whatsoever comes to pass," to all others that are possible. It is equally certain, that nothing whatever occurs in the passage, that can give the least colour to the pretence, that Dr. Bellamy exhibited or regarded the divine plan as consisting "only of what God does," "in distinction from the evil which is its consequence." On the contrary, it is indisputably clear, as well from the whole current of the discussion, as from the most explicit declarations, that both he, and his opponent likewise, "at times certainly," regarded that plan as embracing, like the divine decrees, "whatsoever comes to pass," sin as well as

obedience, and misery as well as happiness; and *that the fact that it includes that sin and misery* were, on the one hand, the ground and the sole ground, on which objection was offered by his opponent to its wisdom; and that that objection was, on the other, the sole objection against which Dr. Bellamy attempted its vindication. Thus he says, in contrasting their views, that "the fundamental point of difference" between them might be distinctly seen,—"I believe God, in *every* part of his conduct *relative to* the intellectual *system*, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do; and *therefore*, that God's present plan is, of all possible plans, the best, most for his glory and the good of the system." "*On the contrary*, the author of the Attempt believes, that God is not obliged to do, and that, in *fact*, he does not do, that which is most for his own glory, or most for the good of the system;" and adds it as the reason of his entertaining that belief, that "he is fully persuaded that the present plan is so far from being the best, *that it had been infinitely more* for the glory of God, and the good of the system, IF SIN HAD NEVER HAPPENED;" and that accordingly, "he attempts to *prove* at large, that it had been *much better if sin and misery had been for ever unknown*."

It is thus indubitably certain, that the question here at issue, in place of being limited to such parts of the divine agency as have no connexion whatever with the existence of sin, as the reviewer represents, relates solely and expressly to the wisdom of the divine purposes and conduct in the permission of that evil. Such accordingly Dr. Bellamy—that he might force his adversary to face the frightful difficulties to which his objection exposed him—proceeded again at the close of the passage distinctly to state it. "So that

this," he says, "is the fundamental and most essential point of difference, and that on which the whole controversy between him and me turns, viz. whether the whole and every part of the divine conduct be agreeable to infinite wisdom," —"whether God always means to do, what he knows to be for the best on the whole? For if he does, *the grand point is proved. The wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is demonstrated.*" The grand point at issue, thus was the wisdom of God *in the permission of sin;* not in such parts of his agency as have no connexion with that evil—a supposition, indeed, that is not only wholly unauthorized, but converts the whole treatise, from its title to its close, into a mere farce. Such also he had stated it on the introductory page of his vindication. "This fact," he says, "that God permits sin, gives *rise* to this question, viz. Is it wisest and best that God should conduct as he does *in this affair?*" Yet, in the face of these facts and representations—representations and facts which it would seem scarcely possible that the humblest rank of intellect could fail to perceive and comprehend; and perceiving them, that the lowest grade of honour could venture to deny—the reviewer presumes calmly and boldly to assert, that "God's plan," "according to Dr. Bellamy, does not include sin as an integral part of it,.but consists only of what God *does*," "in distinction from the evil which is its consequence." On what pretence he can offer an exculpation of this extraordinary act, it is not easy to see. Will he, under the pressure of these "new objections," protest to us that none of the passages which thus demonstrate the total error of his representation, chanced to meet his notice? It is incontrovertible then—as the passage on which he founds his representation, does not contain any thing whatever that can authorize it—that

he either cannot have possessed any evidence or probability of its truth, or must have found them wholly in some other part of the "treatise." But if he really built his representation on some other passage, why was it not produced, and made the ground of his argument? Or if he looked into any other part of the discussion for materials for the verification of his statement, how can it be that all these passages which refute his representation, could have escaped him, thickly strewn as they are over every page?

But we are, perhaps, to find his justification in a subsequent passage, which he quotes from the treatise, and makes the ground of a repetition of his assertion.

"Proceeding in the discussion, we find his opponent affirming that 'supreme wisdom cannot err. So far as God has been concerned in the transactions of the system, they must be good, right, best. But sin is *no part* of God's scheme, but a device of the devil.' To this, Dr. B. replies, 'Very well, sir, and do I understand you now? Do you really mean, that God, in permitting the devil and other wicked beings to do as they do; that God in *this* has done that which was indeed *good, right, best?* For if God's conduct is but approved of, (you may condemn the devil as much as you please) my point is gained.' Now here Dr. Bellamy *most explicitly concedes* that sin is *no part* of God's scheme or plan, and affirms, that if God's conduct in permitting sin be approved of, even without regarding sin as any part of God's scheme or plan, his point is gained."—p. 535, 536.

It is to be regretted that the reviewer did not do his readers the favour to show in what *part* of Dr Bellamy's reply the concession is so expressly made. It presented an opportunity for an exhibition of his "acuteness and force of mind," which he ought not to have so lightly neglected. But it seems, after all the severe lessons which his unsupported statements and misjudged assumptions in former disquisitions have procured him, he has not yet become con-

vinced of the inexpediency of substituting assertion for proof, on even the most contested questions, nor gained the wisdom to abstain from representations, that carry on their very front the fullest proof of their error.

But it is not the only objection to his assertion in this instance, that not a trace of any such concession exists in Dr. Bellamy's reply. It involves a virtual asseveration that his views, on this grand point in controversy, were in fact identically the same as those of his opponent; so that in place of being, as they mutually believed, a point of difference, it was a point of exact and palpable coincidence, and ought accordingly to have been placed by Dr. Bellamy among the "particulars" in respect to which they were "agreed." If such were indeed the fact, it is certainly very remarkable that "a man of Dr. Bellamy's acuteness and force of mind" should have been so totally unaware of it; and after having thus explicitly conceded and positively affirmed all that his opponent asserted, should, in place of acknowledging the error of what he had previously taught, and justifying his opponent, have gone on to rebuke him with the most unsparing severity, for having "disputed against" the "conduct" of God "in the permission of sin," and set it in the "most horrible deformed light possible." But a full development of the reviewer's error requires the exhibition of the passage at large, with which his quotation is connected.

It was Dr. Bellamy's object in this part of his discussion to exhibit to his assailant his gross inconsistency in ascribing wisdom to the Most High, and professing to vindicate his administration, while he continued strenuously to assert that "it is a mere fallacy to pretend that the present scheme is

most for the glory of God," and to avow that he did not believe, "that God does in fact, or that he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." "I am of the opinion," affirmed the author of the Attempt, "that at the day of judgment all God's works and ways will appear to be good." "What do you mean?" answered Dr. Bellamy. "All the divine conduct the result of 'supreme wisdom, which cannot err?' What; will all holy beings, at the day of judgment, think it *best* that God has not *done* best? and humbly admire and adore his acting *contrary* to his own infinite wisdom, holiness, and goodness, as firmly believing *this* was the result of 'supreme wisdom, which cannot err?' Pray explain yourself."

Author. "What I say is really true. 'Supreme wisdom cannot err.' 'So far as *God* has been concerned in the transactions of the system, they must be good, right, best.' But 'sin is no part of *God's* scheme, but a device of the devil.'

Bellamy. "Very well sir; and do I *understand* you now? Do you really mean that God, in *permitting* the devil and other wicked beings to do as they do; that God in *this* has done what was indeed '*good, right, best?*' For if God's conduct is but approved of, (you may condemn the devil as much as you please) *my point is gained; the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is acknowledged.* Pray speak plainly.

"A. Indeed, sir, 'I do doubt whether God does in fact, and therefore whether he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory,' and I do believe it had been infinitely better if sin had never been.

"B. Why then do you profess firmly to believe, that the whole of the divine conduct is 'good, right, best,' and that 'supreme wisdom cannot err?' and that 'all the divine dispensations are to be heartily acquiesced in, as being supremely wise?' How can these things be consistent?

"Had you, sir, *justified* your Maker, fully *acknowledged* the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, and wherein my solutions of

difficulties appeared to you not sufficient, had you given better, still endeavoring *to justify* the ways of God to men, and to assist the people of God in their *belief* of the wisdom of all the divine conduct; —you had merited the thanks of the public and the love of all pious people, and might have been approved of, even in heaven. But do you think Almighty God will be pleased to have his conduct in the permission of sin *disputed against*, and set in the 'most horrible deformed light possible' by one of his own subjects, who ought to love him, approve of all his ways, and plead his cause, in this revolted world? Or do you expect that the friends of God in heaven or earth, will be suited with your *Attempt*, who are all united in believing concerning God, as it is written—He is the rock, his work is perfect?"—pp. 133, 134.

The detection in this passage of an explicit concession by Dr. Bellamy, "that sin is no part of God's scheme," and affirmation "that if God's conduct in permitting sin is approved of, *even without regarding sin as any part of God's scheme or plan; his* point is gained," is truly worthy of one who had not succeeded in discovering what the grand topic is of which the sermons and vindication treat, and whose sole instrument of determining alike the meaning of the language and the object of the arguments of an author is, that of his "true usus loquendi."

The point at which Dr. Bellamy here aimed, as in every other part of his discussion, it is clear beyond all disputation is—not the vindication of that part of the divine conduct or plan which has no relation whatever to the existence of sin, as is the reviewer's representation—but solely to demonstrate his wisdom in the direct and intentional permission of sin,—in standing by and "deliberately" forbearing "to interpose effectually to hinder the introduction of sin into his world, when he could have hindered it, as easily as not." Thus, he says expressly, "if God's con-

duct" "in *this*" "is approved of, my point is gained; the wisdom of God in the permission of sin *is acknowledged*." With this, however, the sentiment imputed to him by the reviewer forms a very distant contrast. The last member of that sentence he thought proper to omit, and substituted for it, what probably in the light of his "true usus loquendi" he regards as more happily coincident with the "known" "nature of the subject,"—"that if God's conduct in permitting sin be approved of—*even without regarding sin as any part* of God's scheme or plan, *his* point is gained." To permit sin as "no part of God's plan," is according to the reviewer's theory, as we have already seen, to permit it as an "evil that is necessarily incidental to a moral system;" an evil the prevention of which is "impossible" to "God in the nature of things"—lying wholly without the sphere of his government, and beyond the reach of his control—and which accordingly has no connexion with "the transactions" in which God is "concerned." The permission of sin, which Dr. Bellamy ascribed to the Most High, is thus resolved by the reviewer into his not having any concern whatever with it; the wisdom of his permitting it, is made to consist in his not being able to hinder it, and it is by the extortion from his assailant of the acknowledgment of *this* wisdom, that Dr. Bellamy's point was gained!

It is equally clear, that instead of making any concession or acknowledgment whatever himself in this passage, Dr. Bellamy was merely endeavoring to ascertain whether his *opponent*—as his admission that "supreme wisdom cannot err" implied—really meant to concede the point in debate, by acknowledging the wisdom of God in the deliberate permission of sin, "when he could have hindered it as easily as not." "Do I understand you?" he says: "Do you

really mean that God in permitting the devil and other wicked beings to do as they do; that God in *this* has done what was indeed good, right, best?—for if God's conduct" "in this" "is but approved of, my point is gained; the *wisdom* of God in the permission of sin is *acknowledged*." In place thus of making any concession himself, his object clearly was to ascertain whether his opponent really intended to acknowledge what his language implied. According to the reviewer's representation, however, he had unfortunately changed sides here with his opponent, and the acknowledgment in question was made solely by himself. The method therefore on that supposition in which he gained his point, was that of openly abandoning his own doctrine, and adopting that of his opponent, which he had before unsparingly denounced as blasphemous, and which he continued to reproach as setting the divine conduct in "the most horrible deformed light possible."

But it is abundantly apparent that Dr. Bellamy not only did not interpret the author of the Attempt as really intending to acknowledge the wisdom of God in the permission of sin; but did not even regard him as holding, either "that supreme wisdom cannot err," or that "so far as God has been concerned in the transactions of the system, they must be good, right, best;"—as he represents him as openly acknowledging, in his answer to the inquiry respecting his meaning, that he doubted "whether God does in fact, and therefore whether he is obliged to do what is most for his declarative glory;" and as avowing his belief, "that it had been infinitely better if sin had never been:"—and Dr. Bellamy accordingly in his reply inquires—"why then do you *profess* firmly to believe that the whole of the divine conduct is good right best," and "that supreme wisdom

cannot err?" "How can these things be consistent?"—"*Had* you, sir, *justified* your Maker; fully *acknowledged* the wisdom of God in the permission of sin—you might have been approved of even in heaven. But do you think Almighty God will be pleased to have his conduct in the permission of sin *disputed against*, and set in the 'most horrible deformed light possible'?"

It thus turns out, that no concession was in fact made by either of the parties in the passage, and that Dr. Bellamy's object was—not at all to surrender any position which he had before been endeavoring to sustain—but solely to demonstrate that his opponent, in place of justifying "the ways of God to man," openly denied his wisdom, and traduced his administration.

The reviewer expresses that part of his fourth argument, which respects the "treatise," in the following language:

"4. He teaches that the existence of moral evil is not a necessary means to the highest glory of God. This he does by stating that the highest glory of God might exist without the introduction of sin into a moral system. 'How MUCH SOEVER to the *honor* of God and to the good of the system, and how desirable soever in these *two* respects it might appear in the sight of God that the intelligent system should *unanimously* adhere and cleave *forever* to the Lord, yet in the nature of things there could be no certain security for this unless,' etc. What is this, but *a full admission*, that unanimous and eternal obedience would have been in *the highest degree* for God's glory?"—p. 536.

He here exhibited something of his "acuteness and force of mind" in suspending his quotation before reaching the end of the sentence of which it forms a part, especially as by arresting it at that point, no clue whatever was given to

the main proposition which it expresses, as will be seen by contrasting what he quotes with the sentence at large.

"But how much soever to the honor of God, and to the good of the system, and how desirable soever in these two respects it might appear in the sight of God, that the intelligent system should unanimously adhere and cleave forever to the Lord, yet in the nature of things there could be no certain security for this unless *he himself*, the only immutable being, *should undertake, and become surety for all his creatures.*"—p. 58.

Had he continued his citation to the end of the sentence, his readers might not only have seen its real object and meaning, but been led to suspect the accuracy of his representation respecting Dr. Bellamy's views of the reason of God's not having undertaken to "become surety for all his creatures," and prevent the entrance of sin into his kingdom; and tempted to believe that it was not a mere matter of helpless necessity, but of deliberate choice—because, "on the whole," as Dr. Bellamy expresses himself, "all things considered, he judged it *best* not to hinder it," "when he could have hindered it as easily as not."

But after lopping it as he did, both at its beginning and its close, its language, to say nothing of its sense, still continued so unsuited to his purpose, as to render it necessary to superinduce a totally unauthorized signification, in order to give his proof and conclusion any resemblance to his proposition. There is no such term in the passage, nor any that is equivalent to it, as "*the highest* glory of God." On the contrary, Dr. Bellamy's language is indefinite, and leaves the *degree* of glory to God and good to the system, involved in an "unanimous and eternal obedience," wholly undetermined. "But *how much soever* to the honour of

God, and to the good of the system, and *how* desirable *soever* in these two respects, it might appear in the sight of God," his expressions are—not, but although "that unanimous and eternal obedience would have been in *the highest degree* for God's glory," as the reviewer represents it. It was by the substitution of the latter for the former—in accordance with his "true usus loquendi,"—that he succeeded in giving to his conclusion its coincidence with his premise.

But had Dr. Bellamy even expressed in the passage, and the other shreds of sentences which are quoted in connexion with it, what the reviewer represents, it would still remain a matter of scarcely less difficulty to discover of what service it could possibly prove to the reviewer's cause. It would only show that Dr. Bellamy, "through inadvertence," became "inconsistent with himself." But that fact would neither demonstrate which, nor whether either of the "different and inconsistent hypotheses" on which he "reasoned," is correct; much less would it lend any sanction to the main features of the reviewer's system, with which the doctrine here ascribed to Dr. Bellamy has no imaginable connexion.

Unhappily the reviewer, after quitting this point, appears neither to have retained a distinct recollection of the position which his purpose required him to sustain, nor to have paused to discover to what system his arguments were best fitted to lend their aid. His chief object seems to have been merely to convict Dr. Bellamy of inconsistency;—an attempt in which, as has already been shown, no success that he could have wished, could prove of any service to his cause. In aiming at it, however, he advances positions, which subvert his own theory, and resorts to arguments that disprove his pretences in respect to Dr. Bellamy. I shall

not continue to follow him through all his gyrations, but simply point out the chief bearings of his course, and designate the gulf into which he at length precipitates himself.

That would seem to be the object of his fifth argument, in which he endeavours to show, that sin cannot "be the *means* of an end, toward which it has no tendency." Dr. Bellamy's representation is, as the reviewer himself admits, that though "sin is the very worst of evils, *in its own nature*, and it *naturally* tends to evil, and only to evil;" yet that by the interception and counteraction of its natural influence through its punishment and forgiveness, and the exhibition thereby of attributes and production of effects, for which no opportunity could otherwise exist, it is rendered by the divine wisdom, the means, instrument, or occasion, of giving birth to a greater sum of good, than could be secured by any system of events, from which sin was excluded. This is the sense, and the only sense in which Dr. Bellamy represented it as the "means of the greatest good." But the fact that it *is* overruled, and made the occasion of good—whether of the highest or only of some subordinate degree is of no significance to his argument—the reviewer himself fully admits, in the paragraph under consideration, as well as in many other passages. He abandons, therefore, and contradicts the assumption, which he here made the ground of his objection to Dr. Bellamy, that sin cannot be "the means of an end toward which it has no tendency;" and levels his argument, accordingly, as much against himself as against him.

In this endeavour, however, to convict Dr. Bellamy of inconsistency, he unhappily involved himself in a difficulty of a still more singular character. "It may be overruled," he says, "*as* an instrument of good." But this representa-

tion is—certainly "if you interpret him to the letter"—that sin is *naturally* "an instrument of good," or antecedently to the interception of the influence which its nature fits it to exert, but that "it may be overruled *as*" such—a process by which, of course, it would become the "means," "instrument," or occasion of evil. "Mere *verbal* incongruities," however, he will doubtless repeat to us, "are not, of course, proof of real contradiction in meaning." It would have been wise, then, not to have made them, at least, so principal a ground as he has, of his representations respecting Dr. Bellamy.

His sixth argument is employed in beating down his own theory, retracting his representations respecting the doctrine of the "treatise," and proving Dr. Bellamy's views to be what I have represented them. He says, in regard to the passage in the treatise respecting the unfaithful servant,

"The only *possible* vindication of the master, in not preventing the act of disobedience is, that the requisite interposition on his part, i. e. the requisite change in his *plan* of government would, in its results, be a greater evil, than to permit the servant 'to take his course.' Dr. Bellamy's answer, then, to this objection, rests not on the theory that 'sin, as a necessary means, is *a part of that plan*,' but on the theory, that 'to prevent sin by changing the system,' would be a greater evil than to permit sin."—p. 537.

Dr. Bellamy's answer then proceeds on the ground, that the reasons of the Most High for permitting the sin which takes place in his kingdom, are wholly of a moral, and not of a physical nature, as the reviewer's theory represents; that he suffers it, not because its prevention is "impossible" to him, "in the nature of things," but solely because he "can promote the glory of God and good of the system *to*

better advantage, by the permission of sin, than by hindering it."

He remarks, likewise, in a subsequent paragraph, that Dr. Bellamy's reply to an objection "is only saying in other words, that infinite wisdom and goodness forbid that God should do more than he actually does, for the purpose" of bringing all to repentance; "or that he should change the existing *system* of influence, because this would be for the worse instead of for the better." This is indubitably the ground on which Dr. Bellamy proceeds, in the passage to which the reviewer here refers, and in every other part of his discussion. But it is equally clear that it is the precise reverse of the theory which the reviewer entertains and has ascribed to him, that the sole reason that sin is admitted into the divine kingdom is, that its entire prevention is "impossible" "to God in the nature of things;" and the representation, that he carries his efforts in every instance for its prevention, to the utmost extent to which his infinite attributes are adequate.

The representations of the "treatise," also, respecting the extent of the divine plan, it would seem from this and the passage last before quoted, had suddenly become very essentially extended, in the reviewer's apprehension. In place of its being so obvious that "this plan, according to Dr. B. does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God *does*," the reviewer has discovered, that in answering objections he was obliged to proceed on the assumption, that it was an integral part of that plan, dictated by "infinite wisdom and goodness," to permit sin, in place of doing "more" than God "actually does," to prevent it, because to "change the existing system of influ-

ence," for the purpose of preventing it, "would be for the worse instead of for the better."

These concessions however respecting the reasons of the permission of sin, he retracts in his next argument, and resorts again to the representation of his theory, that the exclusion of sin from the moral system, is "impossible" "to God in the nature of things." On the question of Dr. Bellamy,—"What more could God have done as his moral governor, to have prevented his apostacy and ruin?"—that is, by the enactment of laws or expression of his will, and enforcement of it by sanctions,—he remarks, "Now what is all this, but saying, that sin, so far from being introduced as a necessary means, was a consequence to which the moral system was *intrinsically liable*, and that God, as moral governor, *could* not prevent it?" that is, that its permission was a matter of mere physical necessity, and not of wise and benevolent choice, because he judged it best not to hinder it, "when he could have hindered it easily as not."

His closing argument is presented in the following passage.

"8. Dr. Bellamy states, that the eternal well-being of *the whole and all the parts of the system*, did not require the existence of moral evil. In other words, sin is not the necessary means of the greatest good. 'It would no doubt be better for *their own interest*, if the rebels in any earthly kingdom would all come in and submit, and they would in such a conduct show more respect to their lawful Sovereign.' p. 100. Now this is altogether beside the purpose, if it does not import that the moral empire of God would be improved, if sinners would all submit, and thus 'show more respect' to the great Sovereign himself. 'Pharaoh had shown more respect to God; and it had been *more for his interest* had he repented of his oppressions, and without delay yielded obedience to the divine command, and let

Israel go. But no man has reason to think it had been better if God had said or done more to make him obedient.' p. 101. But if God would have been more honoured, and the interests of Pharaoh more promoted by his repentance and obedience, then the same happy consequences must follow, if every sinner were to do his duty; so that nothing is wanting to secure the highest glory of God, and welfare of the whole intellectual system, but the entire exclusion of disobedience from God's dominions." p. 538, 539.

The reviewer has here fallen into the error of representing Dr. Bellamy's statements respecting the *personal* interests of Pharaoh, and "the rebels of any earthly kingdom," as relating to the interests of the universe at large, or of asssuming, because Dr. Bellamy admits that it would have been more for Pharaoh's "*own interest*," and that of the rebels of any earthly kingdom, had they repented and yielded obedience; that therefore he must have held—unless his statements were "altogether beside the purpose"—that it would be more for the interests of *God, and* "*the whole intellectual system*," if obedience were rendered universally, by all the subjects of his sway; as though Dr. Bellamy or any other being, ever represented, or imagined, that it would not be better for any individual who perishes, had he avoided disobedience, and been made a partaker of eternal life. His logic is accordingly precisely such as his would be who should regard the declaration of the Savior, that "it had been good for that man" "by whom the Son of man is betrayed," "if he had not been born," as authorizing the conclusion that it had been better for the universe at large, had none of the human family ever been born; and the assurance that "whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drown-

ed in the depths of the sea," as forcing us to the inference, that it were a blessing to the "intellectual system" at large, if every individual of our race were actually subjected to that process.

Such is the extraordinary climax of the reviewer's arguments to prove that Dr. Bellamy's hypothesis respecting the permission of sin is essentially the same with that which he is himself endeavoring to maintain.

It is thus not only abundantly apparent that he has not succeeded in establishing any such identity as he claims of his own and the views of Dr. Bellamy, and that all his arguments without exception, for the purpose, are false alike in their premise, proof, and conclusion, and fraught with inconcealable and flagrant inconsistencies with each other, and violence to all established and safe laws of interpretation and logic to a degree that has scarcely a parallel in the annals of controversy; but it is equally clear, that no "acuteness," nor "gigantic strength" "of mind," can ever render his attempt successful; inasmuch as the views of Dr. Bellamy on every principal branch of the subject,—expressed with the utmost clearness, made the foundation of his reasoning, and wrought into the whole fabric of his discussion,—are diametrically the converse of those which the reviewer imputes to him, and himself entertains.

The renewal by this gentleman of these attempts to sustain his peculiar views by the authority of "respectable theological writers of New-England"—unless it has become a matter of general conviction that his opinions are not entitled to any respect, and thence of certainty that they cannot exert any influence—is adapted to excite apprehension as well as surprise and regret. Of the object of these repeated and zealous efforts, but one judgment can be formed,—

that it is simply to persuade the public, that the contested dogmas, which he has of late made it his chief business to promulgate, are not such errors as they are generally regarded, but have long been the prevalent doctrines of the churches of New-England, and are among the most distinguishing articles of the theological systems of Edwards, Bellamy, and Dwight; and thereby to supply the want of proofs, with names, to evince their truth; and employ the shield of authority, in place of reason and revelation, to rebut the "objections" with which he finds himself assailed.

Of the character, in like manner, of these efforts, but one impression can exist,—that they exhibit a singular absence of the endowments, principles, and accomplishments which become a station like his, and are indispensable indeed to the humblest order of those who aspire to instruct or influence the general mind;—clear apprehensions, sound logic, consistency, fairness, justice to the reputation of those whose doctrines he undertakes to expound, and respect for the discernment, integrity, and independence of his readers. No one, I venture to believe, of the least capability to form a just judgment on the subject, who looks with impartiality into this, and his former efforts of the kind, can fail to be struck with amazement at the open and perpetual disregard by which they are marked—whether intentionally, or through inadvertence, it is neither my business to determine nor conjecture,—of the clearest truths, and flagrant misrepresentations of the most incontrovertible and palpable facts; nor resist the conviction, that if the principles and methods which characterize his discussions, are legitimate, there is an end at once, so far at least as men are concerned, to the claims of evidence and the sanctions of religion;—that no pretences can be too false or absurd,

not to be successfully vindicated, nor any cause ever become hopeless, but that of truth.

And against the continuance of these endeavors, and extension to other doctrines and writers, as he may broach other novelties, or need the aid of additional authority, it is obvious that no guarantee whatever is furnished, either by the views by which he has hitherto shown himself to be governed, nor by any such manifestations of his error, or expressions of disapproval, as have been conveyed to him by others. What new dogma he may not yet claim to have found lurking in the temple of orthodoxy, or under the sanction of what other name he may not next presume to shield his theories, no one can conjecture.

What consequences, however, must naturally result to himself, from measures like these, it needs no eye of prophecy to foresee—a total prostration in the general respect; a fatal extinction in the minds of multitudes of confidence in his principles, as well as reliance on his judgment; and the final dispersion of all possibility, as well as hope, of future usefulness. And what conduct then it is toward him, that kindness to him and fidelity to God demand from his associates in the ministry, is equally clear—a frank and full expression of the disapprobation with which these expedients to sustain his doctrines are regarded, that shall startle him effectually from his dreams of safety, and extinguish the vain expectation of thus tampering with facts, and trifling with public sentiment, with impunity.

THE

CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR'S

REVIEW OF DR. WOODS' LETTERS.

THE reviewer, whom the reader will again recognise as the author of the Concio ad Clerum—or, as with characteristic delicacy he has thought proper in the discussion to denominate himself—"the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College"—had scarcely, it seems, taken "leave of the treatise with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret;—pleasure to find Dr. Bellamy meeting the enemies of divine sovereignty on that vantage ground, which we think ought never to be relinquished; and regret, that in *any instance* he should yield it to his opponents, and be thus *driven to adopt a theory* which made him *inconsistent with himself;*" before, from the reception of "a copy of Dr. Woods' Letters to Dr. Taylor on the same subject," he unexpectedly found the system—which he had just informed his readers, Dr. Bellamy had taught with so much "acuteness and force," as to "deserve the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments"—assailed by such a "pressure of new objections," as to force him not only, in some instances, to "found his answer on another

hypothesis," in order to accomplish "their most effectual refutation;" but sturdily to deny that he had himself ever expressed several of the positions which the theory involves, and vehemently to renew and repeat the protestation, that he had never undertaken to advance it in the form of "an affirmative proposition;" nor "meant to intimate that men *can know* enough on this subject to justify the positive affirmation" of it; nor even "given" "a hint" "that a supposition of this kind is to be received as an article of faith, or is *capable* of direct *proof*."

This zealous retraction of "the praise" which his "admiration" conferred on it at its promulgation, as freeing "the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity," and abatement of its claims to unhesitating acceptance, as presenting "as no other theory in the view of the writer does present, the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects;" conjoined as they are with an instant and strenuous effort to vindicate it from objection and demonstrate its truth; "may," perhaps, "strike our readers as singular from a man" of his "acuteness and force of mind." To the uninitiated, particularly, it must naturally prove a matter of some difficulty to comprehend how one, endowed with so keen an eye as to see his theory written in the utmost clearness on every page of "the treatise," should be so utterly incompetent to discover any traces of an equally "positive affirmation" of it in his own discussions respecting it; and not less perplexing to understand how, if Dr. Bellamy deserves "the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments," for having taught it; the imputation of it to the reviewer by Dr. Woods, can involve so gross a disparagement as he represents, of his in-

tellect, and impeachment of his character. "This fact," however, may not improbably be "easily accounted for, if we consider the nature and object of the discussion in which he was engaged,"—that "the subject was presented under entirely another aspect," and "his mind was intently fixed on the most effectual refutation" of the charge of having, "at different times reasoned on at least" the "two different and inconsistent hypotheses,"—"that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," and that it is not the necessary means of the greatest good; but a baleful incident, "the entire prevention" of which, "in a moral system," is "impossible to God in the nature of things." This sudden retreat from so essential a point of "the vantage ground" of the theory, may not, impossibly, have been achieved, too, without any "disparagement" of his mental power, when compared with that of others of "the first order of intellect." A probability, at least, may be thought to be thrown over this supposition, by the means themselves, through which it was accomplished—the mere wings of some half dozen of interrogation points—a flight not surpassed, I venture to believe, in the annals of literary or even heroic warfare.

The question of his success in this movement is of some interest to others as well as himself. We have seen on what principles he conducts his exposition of the sentiments of "respectable theological writers of New-England;"—that neither the established meaning of language, the plainest declarations, nor the avowed and most unquestionable object for which arguments are employed, are any obstacles to his discovering on their pages any doctrine that his wants or wishes may require. It is worth ascertaining whether he follows the guidance of similar rules when called on to explain and vindicate the import of his own writings, and is

essential indeed in order to discover the real nature and tendency of his theory, and form a just judgment of his character as a theorizer and controversialist. It is not my design to enter into a minute examination of all the denials, "evasions," assumptions, statements, nor interrogations, with which he has favored his readers in this part of his discussion. That task belongs to the gentleman from whose criticism it was his object in it to defend himself. I shall rather make it my chief object to ascertain, whether the views he has presented of his theory, fairly authorize that representation of it which is given in the preceding article —to inquire whether the mode in which he has advanced it, has given his readers just reason to interpret him as really regarding it as true and entitled to belief, and as wishing them to receive it as such, and "dismissing from the mind the two assumptions" to which it stands opposed, allow the views which it "exhibits" of "the providential government of God," to form "the basis of" their "submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures,"—and finally to endeavor to trace its positions to their legitimate results, and determine what are its relations to the doctrines of revelation.

The first inquiry then on which I shall enter is, whether the reviewer's theory is what it is stated to be on a preceding page, and represented to be ascribed by him to Dr. Bellamy;—that "from the nature of moral agency" it is "impossible" to God to prevent "all sin, or at least the present degree of sin in a moral system;" that that is the real and sole reason of its permission in every instance in which it takes place; and accordingly, that "God's plan" "does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God does" "in distinction from the evil which

is its consequence." Of the equivalence of this, to the ampler delineation of it which is there given, whatever additional proof can be thought to be necessary, will naturally arise in the progress of the discussion.

No room then in the first place for denial or doubt can be imagined to exist, that the "supposition" "that God could" not "have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin in a moral system" is the "supposition" of his theory; as that is the literal statement of it, which he presented in the sermon and note in which it was first announced to the public, and which he every where repeats in his subsequent references to it, in his review of Dr. Bellamy and reply to Dr. Woods. Thus, his first annunciation of it in the sermon is in the assertion, that to suppose "that God could have adopted a moral system, and prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin," is a "gratuitous assumption." "For no man knows this—no man can prove it." And in the note he goes on to inquire, "is there then the least particle of evidence that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is possible to God in the nature of things?" "Is there any such evidence from the nature of the subject?" "Who can prove from the nature of the subject, that a being who can sin, will not sin?" "On this point, is it presumptuous to bid defiance to the powers of human reason?" "Is there any evidence from facts?" "How can it be proved from facts, that he could have prevented all sin, or even the present degree of sin in a moral system?" And he winds up with the conclusion that "the assumption therefore that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or the present degree of sin is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized, and *ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument.*"

Such is likewise the representation of it which he every where presents in the review of Dr. Bellamy's "treatise."

"Should it appear," he says, in respect to Dr. Bellamy, "that in stating the question at issue, in many of his reasonings, and especially in answering objections to the perfection of the divine character and government, he has virtually adopted the position that 'sin (in respect to the divine prevention) is *incidental* to the best system' —then may his authority be appealed to with equal or even greater propriety in support of the principles which we have advocated on this subject." "Now this is the way in which *we* would meet the opponents of revelation and divine decrees, when they demand a solution of the difficulties involved in the existence of moral evil. We throw the question back to them. We deny their right to ask any solution whatever, until they have first proved that the fact in question"—"the existence of moral evil"—"is not (as to its entire prevention by God) a 'condition' or *necessary* 'incident' in some part of *any possible moral system.* We do not *affirm* that this is so. The burden of proof does not rest on us. But we will not grant them this preliminary fact, on which their whole objection turns, until they have proved it. And we say that all theory, all speculation on the subject must stop, until this fact is proved. What finite being then, we ask, can know, that a universe of free agents, who possess of course the *power* of sinning, could have been held back from the *exercise* of that power, in every possible conjunction of circumstances, even by all the influences to obedience which God could exert upon them without destroying their freedom?" "This is the ground taken by the Christian Spectator in common with Dr. Taylor." "No other position—nothing that can be called a theory but this—have we ever maintained. And this we shall proceed to show was done by Dr. Bellamy before us, though not as we have already stated, with entire self-consistency."—*Christian Spectator*, pp. 532, 533.

In like manner in his remarks on Dr. Woods' Letters, he represents it as

"The exact position of 'Dr. Taylor and his associates,' as formerly stated in the Christian Spectator," that "it may be that 'sin

as to God's preventing it—not our committing it—is a necessary incident to a moral system.' " " It was—'necessarily incidental' to the system, so far as relates to God's *prevention* of it. *He could not have the system without the sin.*" " Dr. Taylor simply says, that it may be true that in any moral system beings who as free agents can sin, in defiance of all preventing influences, will in some instances actually sin." " What Dr. Taylor holds is, that the nature of moral agency is such, that it may be true, that God cannot prevent sin in all instances under a moral system." " But the question is—what could God have done to secure more holiness and less sin in a moral system? This is the task then, which devolves on Dr. Woods, viz. to prove that God could have kept all sin, or the present degree of sin out of a universal moral system.

" Now we say that this is a task which Dr. Woods *cannot* accomplish; and for this very obvious reason, that the nature of the case absolutely precludes all proof, being one which *may* involve a palpable self-contradiction." " No one *can prove* that God could prevent all sin, or the present degree of it in a moral system."—pp. 544, 552, 562, 563.

It is clear then beyond disputation, that " the supposition" of the theory is, " that God could" not " have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in a moral system." This is the express and sole representation in all these passages, and in a multitude of others that might be added, is perpetually repeated in each of the discussions in which he has treated of the subject, and though " through inadvertence" not unfrequently abandoned for " a different hypothesis," is no where openly attempted to be retracted, nor subjected to modification. The error which he imputes to Dr. Woods in his " statement of the question at issue," so far as this topic is concerned, is—not that he represents him as having advanced the theory that the entire prevention of sin in a moral system is impossible to God in the nature of things, *in the form of a sup-*

position, but of "an affirmative proposition"—that he "changed Dr. Taylor's question into an *assertion*, his *hypothetical* statement into a *positive affirmation*."

This feature then, at least, of his hypothesis the reviewer has stated too explicitly, and repeated too often, to leave any room for its denial, and it is obviously the most essential article of his theory, plainly includes the others, and would alone carry us substantially both to all the subordinate positions which they express, and the remoter conclusions which are now seen to result from the system at large. Thus wherever the ground of impossibility to God of preventing all sin, or the present degree of it, may be supposed to lie, if such an impossibility in fact exists, it is clear beyond debate that God cannot effectually govern, or determine the conduct of moral agents. But if he cannot constitute a certainty beforehand of the manner in which they act, it is equally indisputable, both that he cannot foresee the events of their agency, and that they are literally—whether from *their* nature or *his*, is of no significance to the result—independent of his control. And finally, if sin is an event which he can neither prevent nor secure, which if it take place at all, must necessarily take place independently of his sway, it follows incontrovertibly that his "plan," if he is a being of wisdom, cannot include either its prevention or permission, nor at most contemplate it in any other relation than that of a mere "possibility." Several of these positions, however, the other articles of the theory directly express or more visibly imply.

Thus its next specification is, that this "limitation of the power of God" is constituted by the "nature of moral agency." In the note to the sermon he says,

" Does not he equally limit the power of God by supposing or rather affirming that God *could not* secure the greatest good without the existence of sin? On either supposition there is what may be called a limitation of the power of God by *the nature of things*. In the one case, the limitation is supposed to result from *the nature of sin;* in the other from *the nature of moral agency*. If then one of these suppositions *must* be made, which is the most honorable to God?" " Is it more honorable to God to suppose that such is the nature of *sin*, that he could not accomplish the highest good without it, than to suppose that such is the nature of *free agency*, that God could not wholly prevent its perversion?"

He expresses himself in the same manner also, in the review under notice.

" What Dr. Taylor holds is, that *the nature of moral agency is such*, that it may be true that God cannot prevent sin in *all instances* under a moral system."—p. 552.

After these general statements of his views he proceeds in other passages to show, that the particular attribute of moral beings, which he supposes must necessarily impose this " limitation" on the Holy One of Israel, is their " power." Thus in the note to the sermon.

" Is there then the least particle of evidence that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is possible to God in the nature of things?" " Is there any such evidence from the nature of the subject? It is here to be remarked that the prevention of sin by any influence that destroys *the power to sin*, destroys moral agency. Who then can prove, a priori, or from the nature of the subject, *that a being who* CAN *sin*, will not sin?"

The same representation is repeated by him in his review of Dr. Bellamy and Dr. Woods.

"What finite being then we ask can know, that a universe of free agents, who possess of course the *power* of sinning, could have been held back from the *exercise* of that power, in every possible conjunction of circumstances, even by *all the influences to obedience which God could exert upon them without destroying their freedom.*" "This is the task then which devolves on Dr. Woods, viz. to prove that God could have kept all sin, or the present degree of sin out of a universal moral system. Now we say that this is a task which Dr. Woods *cannot* accomplish; and for this very obvious reason, that the nature of the case absolutely precludes all proof, being one which *may* involve a palpable self-contradiction. It will not be denied, that free moral agents *can* do wrong under every possible influence to prevent it. The possibility of a contradiction in supposing them to be prevented from doing wrong is, therefore, demonstrably certain. Free moral agents *can* do wrong under all possible preventing influences. Using their powers as they *may* use them, they *will* sin, and no one can show that some such agents *will* not use their powers, as they *may* use them."—pp. 533, 562, 563.

This feature also of the theory is thus expressed with too great frequency and distinctness to leave it possible for the reviewer to disown it or attempt its modification, and carries us in like manner with resistless certainty to the conclusions respecting God and his government, which we drew from the former.

The next branch of the theory that demands our notice, is, its exhibition of this "limitation of the power of God," as the real and sole reason of the permission of sin in every instance in which it takes place.

That such is in truth the representation which it is intended to express, and inevitably involves, is incontrovertibly certain. It is necessarily implied in the act itself, of seriously constructing a theory on the subject. What imaginable object can this or any other hypothesis respecting it have, if it is not solely intended, as it professes, to vindicate the con-

duct of God in the admission of the sin which exists into his kingdom? The supposition that it does not relate to that admission of it, which actually takes place, converts the pretence of vindicating his character by it and freeing "his government from embarrassment," into a mere farce. In place of solving the difficulties of the administration which he is in fact exercising, it then becomes only a hypothetical solution of a merely hypothetical administration, and leaves the actual government of God not only unexplained, but utterly unaffected. Such was not, however, the reviewer's intention in the construction and promulgation of his hypothesis. His avowed and sole object was, to exhibit the grounds of the non-prevention of the sin which actually takes place in the divine kingdom; and thereby lead "the mind" "to view the character and government of God" in a mode that shows them to be "free from embarrassment." "The supposition" which he presents is, "that *the evil which exists* is in respect to divine prevention, incidental to the best possible system, and that notwithstanding the evil, God will secure the greatest good possible to him to secure;" and that therefore no one "can impeach either his wisdom or his goodness, because evil exists." And this "theory," he assures us, in fact "exhibits *the providential government of God* as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, *under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures;*" and "also presents, as no other theory, in the view of the writer does present, *the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory*, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects." It is not intended, therefore, at all to "free" a supposititious "character" "from embarrassment," to exhibit an imaginary providence "as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, *under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures*," nor to "present" a hypothetical

" moral government of God in its *unimpaired* perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects;" but to make such an exhibition of *that* providential and moral government which he actually exercises; and in order that it may prove to the subjects over whom it is established, " the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that" " befall" them.

This, however, is not merely the natural and only consistent construction of the theory, but is the only one that can be admitted without involving an abandonment of the hypothesis itself. To grant that God could have prevented any portion of the sin which he suffers to take place, is to admit the existence of the very difficulty which it is the object of the theory to escape, and to disarm it, therefore, of the possibility of accomplishing the end for which it was contrived; for it is its professed and sole design to elude the difficulties involved in the supposition that God could have prevented all or any portion of the sin that exists, and yet did not choose to prevent it. And, moreover, if it is granted that the permission of a portion of the evil that exists, is grounded wholly on moral reasons, and not on a want of power to prevent it, what proof or probability can there be that such is not the fact in respect to all? Where, or how is any limitation to be imposed on this admission? Can any sins be designated among those which take place, which can with any propriety be supposed to have been more incapable than others of prevention by infinite wisdom and power? Can any better reasons exist for either denying or affirming the truth of the theory in respect to any one class or portion of those sins, than any other? The assumption that such is the fact, is obviously

wholly unauthorized, and entitled to no more respect than any other "groundless assumption," that may have been adopted for the purpose of evading "the difficulties of this difficult subject." If it is conceded, that the existing evil is not necessarily incidental to the system in some of the instances in which it is allowed to take place, no reason whatever of the least plausibility can be given for supposing that it sustains any such relation to it in the other instances of its existence. To admit that the opposite theory is in any degree true, therefore, is obviously not only to deny the truth of this to an equal extent, but is to grant the existence of the difficulty, the admission of which it is its object to escape, and abandon the only ground on which even a supposition of its truth can with any propriety be made.

We are carried irresistibly to the same conclusion by his argument respecting "the nature of moral agency." To concede that God could have prevented sin in any instance in which it takes place, is to concede that he could have constituted a certainty before hand, that that sin would not be exerted. His argument, however, respecting power, totally denies the possibility of constituting such a certainty; and it is on that denial that the whole fabric of his theory rests. The distinctness with which he advances this representation, and confidence which he exhibits in its accuracy, are seen from the following passages:

"It will not be denied, that free moral agents *can* do wrong, under every possible influence to prevent it. The *possibility* of a contradiction in supposing them to be prevented from doing wrong, is therefore demonstrably certain. Free moral agents *can* do wrong under all possible preventing influence. Using their powers, as they *may* use them, they *will* sin; and no one can show that some such agents will not use their powers as they *may* use them. But to suppose them

to use their powers as they *may* use them, and yet to suppose them to be *prevented* from sinning, would be to suppose them both to sin and to be prevented from sinning at the same time; which is a contradiction."

"But this possibility that free agents will sin, remains (suppose what else you will) so long as moral agency remains; and how can it be *proved* that a thing *will not* be, when, for aught that appears, it *may be?* When, in view of all the facts and evidence in the case, it remains true that it may *be*, what evidence or proof can exist that it *will not* be? Yea, when to suppose it prevented, may involve, for aught that appears, a palpable *self-contradiction?* And must we, to honour God, affirm boldly and confidently that he can do, what may involve the same contradiction, as to affirm that he can cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time? Is God honoured by the assertions of mere ignorance, and by our affirming that to be true of him, which may be utterly false?"—p. 563.

The whole intent of his argument thus is, to demonstrate that no certainty could possibly have been constituted before hand, that any one of the sins that take place, would not be exerted. He pronounces the supposition of it to be utterly self-contradictory. So long as the power of sinning remained, so long must the possibility of its being exerted in that mode have remained, and no certainty therefore that it would not be exerted in that mode, could possibly have been constituted. To affirm the contrary is as absurd, he protests to us, as to affirm "that God can cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time."

But his reasoning not only represents that God could not have prevented sin in any of the instances in which it is exercised, but carries us likewise to the conclusion, that no means that he could have used, could have contributed any influence or possessed any tendency whatever *toward securing* that result. His argument proceeds on the assumption, that "in view of all the facts

and evidence in the case," the possibility of a being's sinning is exactly co-extensive with his power of sinning; that no means therefore that may be employed for the purpose, can have any tendency to diminish that possibility and constitute a certainty of his exercising obedience, any farther than their influence diminishes his power itself of sinning; and that, accordingly, they cannot be carried to such an extent as to render it actually certain that he will not transgress, unless it be by the extinction of his powers of moral agency. The assumption which forms the foundation of his whole hypothesis, is thus fully equivalent to an asseveration, that it is physically impossible for God to prevent the commission of sin in any instance in which it takes place, unless it be by the annihilation of the being by whom it is exercised.

His representation, also, that "God's plan" "does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what God *does*," obviously involves the same conclusion. To admit that he voluntarily permits sin in any instance in which he might prevent it, is in so many words to admit that it was an integral part of his plan to permit, in place of preventing it in that instance, and to give up, therefore, that article of the theory which denies it to have been an integral part of his plan. The only mode in which it can be supposed to take place, "without regarding" it "as any part of God's scheme or plan," is that of coming into existence without his having foreseen or been able to prevent it;—the exact mode in which it must take place, if, as the hypothesis represents, he cannot constitute any certainty beforehand, either that it will or will not be exerted.

He presents the same views in the following passage:

"*Evasion* 2. He represents Dr. Taylor as *denying* that God has power to direct and control the human mind *as he pleases*. Nothing can be more remote from the fact. Dr. Taylor simply says, that it *may be true*, that in any moral system, beings who, as free agents, *can* sin, in defiance of all preventing influences, will in some instances *actually* sin. Now, if there *are* such cases, then the divine Being never *pleased*, *willed*, *or purposed* in those cases to prevent the sin. To suppose, then, that some would sin, whose sin God did not purpose to prevent, is not inconsistent with God's doing all that he has *purposed* to do; i. e. *doing as he pleases.*"—p. 552.

Here is no pretence, the reader will notice, that any error was committed in the representation that he had taught, by a "hypothetical statement" at least, that God could not have prevented sin in any instance in which it takes place; but his sole object is, to show how that hypothesis may be consistent with the supposition, that God still "has power to direct and control the human mind *as he pleases*," and the expedient which he employs for that purpose is, not that of vindicating his omnipotence, but simply of circumscribing his pleasure within the limits imposed by the theory on his power. He says, "if there are cases" in which, "in defi ance of all preventing influences," "beings who as free agents can sin," "will in some instances *actually* sin," "then the divine Being never *pleased*, *willed*, *or purposed* in those cases to prevent the sin;"—and therefore the supposition, that "from the nature of things," it was impossible for him to prevent it, does not involve any denial that he "has power to direct and control the human mind *as he pleases*." His argument thus openly proceeds on the ground that his theory supposes that God cannot prevent sin in the instances in which beings "*actually* sin," and is expressly intended to vindicate it from an objection *founded on that construction of it*, and not at all to deny the justice of that construction

itself. It obviously amounts, therefore, to an admission of the accuracy of that construction.

Additional evidence that this is the legitimate import of his theory, is furnished by the fact, that when called on to "solve the difficulties" in which this construction of it involves him, he has not chosen to disown it.

"*Evasion* 3. Dr. Woods represents Dr. Taylor as holding, that 'the *very nature* of moral agency is such, that God cannot prevent its perversion;' i. e. cannot prevent the commission of sin. Hence, Dr. Woods infers, that God cannot prevent sin in *any* instance in which moral agency exists. What Dr. Taylor *holds* is, that the nature of moral agency is such, that it *may* be true that God cannot prevent sin in ALL instances, under a moral system. Can Dr. Woods show, that it follows from this supposition, that God cannot prevent sin in *any* instance in which moral agency exists?"—p. 552.

It is thus expressly offered here in objection to his representations respecting the nature of moral agency, that they authorize the inference "that God cannot prevent sin in any instance in which moral agency exists;"—an inference, implying a far greater limitation of God's "power to direct and control" his creatures, than is expressed in that specification of the theory which is now under consideration. If then he really regarded the inference as unauthorized and unjust, and felt himself competent to show it to be a mere "evasion," it certainly became him both to state that such was his conviction, and to vindicate his statements by an open and unanswerable demonstration of the erroneousness of the objection. It was due to himself and to the public, as well as to the interests of truth. His vehement protestations, "that he is not aware of any change in his own views on these points, since he entered the ministry; nor of any departure in any article of doctrinal belief, from his revered

instructor in theology, the former president of the college," and eager wish to continue to enjoy the reputation of orthodoxy, imperiously required him to summon his whole powers in this exigency, and to beat down for ever, if possible, so fatal an objection to his system and himself. Not the slightest attempt, however, of that kind is made. In place of it, he merely proceeds to reaffirm that "what Dr. Taylor HOLDS is," the very theory which Dr. Woods made the ground of his inference and objection. "What Dr. Taylor *holds* is, that the nature of moral agency is such, that it *may* be true that God cannot prevent sin in ALL instances under a moral system." He thus, while openly avowing this as his hypothesis, neither expressly denies the justice of Dr. Woods' inference from it, nor takes the trouble even to resort to a "different and inconsistent hypothesis," in order to escape the pressure of the objection;—an instance of very unusual negligence certainly, if he was really desirous of accomplishing its "most effectual refutation." No pretence whatever is offered, nor intimation given, that the impossibility of God's preventing sin, may not extend consistently with his theory, not only to all the instances in which sin actually takes place, but to every instance also "in which moral agency exists." The bounds within which this "limitation of the power of God" may be circumscribed, are left wholly indeterminate and unrestricted. After thus repeating the supposition, which Dr. Woods made the ground of his objection—as though he had hurled a shaft that must inevitably carry discomfiture to his antagonist—he complacently vaults from the field on the pinions of his favourite interrogation: "Can Dr. Woods *show* that it follows from this supposition, that God cannot prevent sin in *any* instance in which moral agency exists?" A due degree of justice to

Dr. Woods, respect for his readers, or care for his reputation, would, I cannot but think, have led him, before offering such an inquiry, to *show* that Dr. Woods had *not* already succeeded in demonstrating the validity of his inference. This was "the question" for *Dr. Taylor* "*to answer*," not to address to Dr. Woods. "Why does he thus evade it?"—p. 553. Who it is that is in truth here obnoxious to the charge of "evasion," is no very difficult question to determine, nor is it a task of any greater perplexity to distinguish the character of the imputed from that of the real "evasion." The evasion with which Dr. Woods is charged, lies in his offering an objection to the reviewer's theory, so obviously legitimate, that even when subjected to its fatal pressure, he did not attempt to disprove, nor venture to deny its validity; and in sustaining that objection by an open and perspicuous argument, which, it is no extravagance to affirm, neither the reviewer nor any other human being can ever refute, as long as knowledge continues to be the opposite of ignorance, and truth the reverse of falsehood. The "evasion" of which the reviewer is in fact guilty, consists in his making a pretence of vindicating himself, and refuting Dr. Woods' objection, without in truth doing or undertaking any thing that can contribute to either; and in then attempting to fasten on Dr. Woods the dishonor of employing the artifice on which he himself relied for safety, and of which he alone was either guilty or capable. And this is, unhappily, a specimen of both the prevalent spirit and reasoning of his reply to the legitimate questions, fair statements, just objections, and unanswerable argumentation of that gentleman's Letters.

But finally, the reviewer has presented us with the most abundant certainty, that this is the genuine import of his

theory, by openly and expressly declaring, that it is not his "opinion," that God has chosen to admit the existing sin into the system, on the ground of its being to him "the best means of securing his obedient kingdom in perpetual allegiance;" as obviously if it is not permitted for that reason, it must be from a mere inability to prevent it, without the dissolution of the system.

"But we have one thing more to add respecting Dr. Taylor's inquiry, 'Can it be proved from facts that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness, without this influence?' (i. e. of the punishment of sin.) Dr. Woods supposes Dr. Taylor in this question to affirm that it could *not* be done. But the contrary is obvious from the whole tenor of his remarks. He was simply reasoning with his opponents on their *own* principles; the argument was *ex concessis*. 'You maintain (what I do not,) that God prefers sin to holiness in its stead. On your principles, then, I ask, may not God have chosen to admit the existing sin into the system, as the best means of securing his obedient kingdom in perpetual allegiance? May not *this* be the good, in view of which he chose not to prevent sin? If so, then the reason of the choice is a different one from that which you assign. And until you prove that this was *not* the reason, you cannot *affirm*, that sin entered the system, as 'the necessary means of the greatest good.' Dr. Woods then, has confounded an argument *ex concessis*, with a statement of Dr. Taylor's *opinion* on this subject; and has triumphed greatly in the complete overthrow of his opponent, by that which has no existence, except in the inaccuracy of his own conceptions." "But we have shown (p. 551) that the supposition alluded to by Dr. W. viz. 'that the sin of some might be necessary to secure the holiness of others,' *was no part of Dr. T.'s scheme*,—that he made it merely as an argument *ex concessis*, which was fatal to his opponent, *while he himself places his reliance on a very different supposition.*"—pp. 551, 556.

He thus openly and zealously affirms that neither "the supposition that the sin of some might be necessary to secure the holiness of others," was any part of his scheme;

nor the supposition that it offered a better instrumentality for that end than other means that could have been employed for the purpose. But if it was not admitted into the system on one or the other of these grounds,—necessity or expediency for that purpose—it plainly, if God is supremely wise, cannot have been admitted at all *as a means* to that end; inasmuch as a being of infinite knowledge and goodness cannot be supposed to choose a mean, to an ultimate moral end, which is less adapted to its attainment, than others that lie within his power,—and the adoption of which, therefore, must necessarily obstruct its attainment, limit the happiness of his kingdom, and dim the glory of his administration? If its existence or prevention depended solely on his choice, and no good could be gained by its permission, which could not be secured equally well by some other instrumentality, what can be more certain than that God could not have chosen to permit, in place of preventing it? The reviewer, therefore, in thus protesting to us that it is no part of his scheme to suppose that God has "chosen to admit the existing sin into the system," on the ground that any good could be secured by its permission, which could not have been obtained equally well by some other instrumentality, has given us as strong an assurance as he could have uttered, that "the very different hypothesis" on which "he places his reliance," is, that the sole reason of its permission in every instance in which it takes place, is, that "from the nature of things," it is impossible for God to prevent it, or that, as he elsewhere expresses himself, "he could not have the system without the sin." To hold that God permits it for the sake of the good effects to his kingdom, of which he makes it the instrument, and that yet,—evil as it is, and infinite as are the evils to which it gives

birth—no good results are secured by it, which might not have been obtained with equal ease by means that would not have involved any of these evils, is in so many words to accuse him of infinite folly and malevolence.

This hypothesis therefore—fraught as it is with open contradiction to the attributes of God and doctrines of his word—is as indisputably as the others, an article of the reviewer's theory, and cannot be shuffled from it by any artifice, without a total subversion of the whole fabric.

The last feature of the theory, which this branch of the discussion requires me to notice is, its exhibition of the "divine plan," as including neither the good nor evil agency of his creatures—but consisting "only of what *God* does."

That this is an essential branch of his hypothesis, and indissolubly connected with its other main positions, no imaginable room is left for disputation or doubt. Of the "two different hypotheses," on which according to his representation Dr. Bellamy "at different times reasoned," one he informs us is,

> "That the system or *plan*, which God adopted, (not the sin which was incidental to it as a certain consequence,) is the necessary means of the greatest good."—p. 529.

"God's plan," is thus distinguished not only from the evil which is its "certain consequence," but likewise from "the greatest good"—the holiness and happiness which are its results. So far is it from embracing any portion of even these, that it is only "the necessary *means*" of their production. This hypothesis he immediately proceeds to avow as his own.

> "This latter hypothesis we need *hardly say*, is the one which we

have affirmed, in common with Dr. Taylor in his sermon on the nature of sin."—p. 530.

This is the representation accordingly which he every where gives of his "opinion on this subject." "We shall proceed to show" that "Dr. Bellamy before us"—"decisively countenanced the hypothesis, that the system or plan which God has adopted, *(in distinction from the sin which is its consequence,)* is the necessary *means* of the greatest good;" "and this plan, according to Dr. B. does not include sin as an integral part of it, but consists only of what *God* does." "Dr. Bellamy most explicitly concedes that sin is *no part* of God's scheme or plan."

And this is obviously the only hypothesis on the subject—as has been already remarked—that can be adopted in any consistency with the other representations of his theory. If God neither does nor can determine, the manner in which his moral creatures act, nor foresee any of the events of their agency—if their very nature as free agents places them irrecoverably beyond the reach of his control, he clearly cannot, consistently with his wisdom, be believed to have ever attempted or designed to determine definitively the events of their agency.

Thus obvious is it, that these several positions, which were represented in the preceding article as involved in his hypothesis, and indissolubly connected with each other, are openly, expressly, and perpetually exhibited by him as the grand constituents of his theory.

This theory, however, under "the pressure" of the "new objections" with which he finds it assailed by Dr. Woods, the reviewer assures us he has never put forth as having any real claims to the character of truth, nor intimated that it is to be received as "an article of belief;" and passion-

ately reproaches Dr. Woods as guilty of extreme error and injustice in conducting the discussion as though he really regarded it as a just theory, sustained by evidence; and desired it to be adopted by the clergy and church as presenting "the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory," and employed accordingly to solve "the difficulties of this difficult subject." All, he protests, that he has either professed or attempted is, to present it in the form of a "hypothetical proposition," "not that it *is* true, or can be supported by absolutely decisive evidence; but that it *may* be true, and that it has never yet been proved to be false."

"Suppose he should seriously contend, that to ask the question, *May* not this be so, is the same as to affirm in direct terms, *It is so*; and that the *hypothetical* proposition, 'friction *may* be a necessary condition or incident to the existence of the machine,' is an *affirmative* proposition, that this is the fact. What would be thought of such a mode of meeting an opponent?

"Now this is exactly what Dr. Woods has done, both in his statement of the point at issue, and in the whole course of his subsequent reasoning. He has changed Dr. Taylor's question into an assertion —his *hypothetical* statement into a *positive affirmation*. And on what pretence has he done this? Without a particle of evidence, that Dr. Taylor meant any thing different from what he said. He has indeed shown, that his opponent declines to receive the theory that sin is 'the necessary means of the greatest good,' until it be first proved that sin (as to God's prevention), was not like friction in the machine, a necessary incident to the existence of our system. But has he shown, that Dr. Taylor any where maintains or ever meant to *intimate*, that men *can* know enough on this subject, to justify the positive affirmation, that sin *is* such a condition or incident? No."—"Not a hint is given that a supposition of this kind is to be received as an article of faith, or is capable of direct *proof*. It was sufficient for his purpose, that until the objector could *disprove* it, his lips must be forever sealed, as to replying against God. His statements

in the note are equally guarded. He says, that the theory so generally relied on to account for the existence of evil, rests on a gratuitous *assumption*. But he does not say or intimate, that the *contrary* of that assumption can be established by proof, or should be made an article of belief. Not one of Dr. Woods' apologies (pp. 23, 24) for charging this statement upon him, touches this point in the least. They go only to show that Dr. T. declines to receive the *other* theory.

"Dr. Woods then, without the shadow of a reason, has changed the fundamental position of Dr. Taylor, on which the whole discussion turns, into another, and a different one, which he has never maintained."—pp. 541, 542.

It would seem from the vehemence with which these complaints and pretences are uttered, that the reviewer imagined some very important advantages either in its defence, or his justification, were secured by putting forth his system in the attitude of a mere "hypothetical proposition," in place of a "positive affirmation," claiming to be founded in truth, and sanctioned by such evidence as to give it a just passport to general belief. It is not easy to discover, however, what essential difficulties he avoids, or advantages he gains, in regard either to his character and responsibility, or the moral influence of his theory, by promulgating it in the form of a "hypothetical statement;" inasmuch as the supposition itself—in the mode in which he offers it—that what that statement expresses is true, necessarily involves a disbelief and denial of all the doctrines and facts which would be openly denied by directly affirming the truth of that statement. To allege, as he does, that it *may* be true that God cannot prevent all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in a moral system, is not only to proceed on the assumption, but is directly to assert, that there is no certainty or proof that he *can* prevent that sin; and this he openly asserts indeed, and makes it the basis of his

theory. But this is to assume and act on it as a fact, that God cannot govern his moral creatures,—and this is to assert that, so far as their agency is concerned, they are wholly independent of his efficient control; and to contradict in a word, every divine attribute, and give up every doctrine of reason and revelation, that stands opposed to what that "hypothetical statement" presumes to be true. By this abandonment, therefore, and contradiction of these truths and facts, he obviously becomes obnoxious essentially to all the difficulties and objections in which he could involve himself by directly asserting the truth of the hypothesis. But the sole question of the least significance either to him or the world, respects the truth or error of these doctrines. If these are not true, it is of very little consequence what hypothesis it is, that has most of accuracy in it, or error. Nothing is then left worth contending for, either in philosophy or religion. His error accordingly lies, in making and promulgating a supposition—no matter in what shape it is presented, hypothetical or affirmative—which implies and presumes that God is incompetent to govern his moral kingdom; that consequently there is no certainty to him or his creatures, what are to be its ultimate results; no just ground therefore for confidence in his predictions, nor reliance on his promises; and thence no sufficient reason for yielding him the homage which he challenges as due to his power, wisdom, truth, and benevolence. For if the reviewer is *authorized* to offer his theory in even the form of a hypothetical statement, it is clear beyond question—whatever else may, or may not be true,—that there is no truth in any of those great doctrines of reason and revelation, the falsehood of which his theory assumes and asserts.

Such would be the result of a similar hypothesis respect-

ing any other doctrinal subject. A denier, for example, of the divinity of the Son of God, who should choose to put forth his theory in the form of a supposition, that he is only a mere man, or at least only a creature, affirming of his "hypothesis," "not that it *is* true, or can be supported by absolutely *decisive* evidence; but that it *may* be true, and that it has never yet been *proved to be false*," nor ever *can* be proved to be such; would clearly in that act *give up and deny his divinity*, as specifically and totally as though he had uttered his "hypothetical statement" in the shape of the most "positive affirmation." And he plainly—if any thing better than a mere trifler—could never feel *authorized* to offer such a supposition, unless he regarded it as at least *possibly* true, and the doctrine accordingly, which it contradicts, as possibly false; nor deem himself at all justified in positively asserting, that "no one *can*" ever "*prove*" *his hypothesis* "*to be false*," unless he regarded the doctrine of Christ's divinity as totally unsupported by proof, and unworthy of credence. No imaginable advantage, therefore, could result from his placing his theory in the form of an hypothesis, instead of a "positive assertion." He could not retain by that means any juster ground for the pretence, that he was "not aware" "of any departure in any article of doctrinal belief" from his cotemporaries who adhere to the doctrine of Christ's divinity, nor that he had not "knowingly and intentionally" arrayed himself against "the orthodox articles of faith." In order to be capable of offering such an hypothesis, he plainly must be a Unitarian in fact, and in the judgment of common sense, and would be guilty of as vital a rejection of the truth, and as effectual a promulgation of error, and involve himself in every respect in

as fearful a responsibility as though he "had changed" his "hypothetical statement into a positive affirmation."

No imaginable advantage, therefore, in respect either to his difficulties or responsibilities, can be gained by the reviewer by placing, or inducing his readers to regard him as placing his theory on the ground of a mere hypothesis. The only task of any significance that he has to perform is, to justify his denial of those doctrines which his hypothesis assumes to be false, and the open abandonment of which, accordingly, is necessarily involved in the act of *making* that supposition. If he accomplishes this task, he will then find none, I suspect, among his readers, that can deem it worth while to raise any question, whether his theory professes to be only a mere "hypothetical statement," or a demonstrated truth.

He, however, not only has not gained any advantage by limiting his theory to this hypothetical form, but has obviously added most essentially to the difficulties of his condition. The attitude in which his scheme is now presented, is that of a mere hypothesis, that not only does not claim the character of truth or certainty, but does not pretend to enjoy the sanction of any "direct proof," nor even to be "capable" of being "supported by absolutely decisive evidence." He zealously insists, indeed, that all its statements and suppositions shall be regarded as the mere offspring of conjecture, unauthorized by any evidence that can give it a just claim to "be made an article of belief." But this is obviously to disarm it of all power and adaptation to answer the ends for which it is designed; and yield up to those who doubt or impeach the divine wisdom in the permission of sin, the whole ground which they make the basis of their objection. He now, by his own specific admission, enjoys

no better means of maintaining his theory, than those objectors whom he employs it to silence, do to sustain their objections; or concedes, in other words, the impossibility of proving his hypothesis, as distinctly as he affirms the impossibility of proving theirs. He, therefore, can no more "throw the question back to them," "when they demand a solution of the difficulties involved in the existence of moral evil," than they can throw it back to him; nor any more "deny their right to ask any solution whatever, until they have first proved that the fact in question"—"the existence of moral evil"—"is not (as to its entire prevention by God) a 'condition,' or necessary 'incident,' in some part of any possible moral system," than they can deny his right to assume or suppose that it is such a "condition," until he shall have proved that it is.

This expedient of repelling objectors by throwing "the question back to them," were supremely ridiculous indeed, had he chosen to present his theory in any other form. It at least is a matter of extreme difficulty to comprehend how he can have acquired so extraordinary a right to take it for granted that his hypothesis is correct. On what better ground can he put forth these claims that his supposition shall be considered as of course expressive of fact, until its error is demonstrated, than can the objectors whom he thus sets at defiance, that their supposition shall be taken for granted, till proved to be false? These pretences are fraught, however, with still intenser absurdity, when coupled as they now are, with an undisguised acknowledgment that the objections against which they are directed, are in fact completely unanswerable. "The opponents of revelation and divine decrees," whom he wishes to "meet" by his "hypothetical statement," are now, when he attempts to "throw the question back to

them," fully authorized to retort, that by his own representation, his whole supposition "*may*" be false; and, at all events, neither ever has, nor ever *can be* "*proved*" to be true; and claim, accordingly, that "the burden of proof does not rest on" them; that they "will not grant" his "preliminary" assumption, on which his "whole objection turns, until" he has "proved it;" and protest that "all theory, all speculation on the subject must stop," and their objection be considered as valid, until his assumption "*is* proved." At all events, they may claim that it is "sufficient" for their "purpose," so far as he is concerned, that until he shall "disprove" his own representation, "his lips must be for ever sealed as to replying" to their objection, and the "character and government of God" continue involved in "embarrassment."

This vaunted "vantage ground" of his theory, thus turns out to be nothing else than an open and eager admission, that there are in fact no materials within our reach, by which the conduct of the Most High, in the permission of sin, can possibly be vindicated; that the objections offered by his enemies to his administration, are, at least as far as our powers of refutation go, entirely unanswerable; and finally, that the only conceivable expedient by which we can be "led to view" his "character and government," in a mode that shall show them to be "free from embarrassment," is that of "dismissing from the mind" the supposition that he is responsible in any manner for the existence of evil, by assuming that the causes that give it existence, lie wholly without the sphere of his government, and are necessarily independent of his control:—an extraordinary method truly, of justifying the ways of God to man, and causing the lips of "the enemies of divine sovereignty" to

"be for ever sealed;" thus gratuitously to concede to them the whole ground of their objection, and acknowledge it to be impossible to disprove its validity; and an equally singular expedient to exhibit "the providential government of God as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures," thus zealously to deny the existence of that government, and throw those creatures irrecoverably beyond the limits of his sway. However "incompetent" "ignorance" may be "to make an objection," it seems it regards itself as abundantly adequate to the construction and promulgation of a "hypothetical statement," and has ventured to vault into the chair of "the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College," and present to the public this theory; and it certainly bears the most unequivocal marks of its origin.

A condition of more irremediable perplexity than that in which the reviewer has thus placed himself and his hypothesis, cannot easily be conceived; nor a more ridiculous attitude imagined than that which he exhibits, when from this abyss of self-contradiction, confusion, and error, into which he precipitated himself, to escape the terror of Dr. Woods' objections, he sends up to us the self-complacent inquiry: "Where now are Dr. Woods' reasonings? Who now is liable to the charge of rashness and metaphysical subtilty? The man who insists on carrying forward his theories beyond *this starting point*, or the man who stops *here*?"

After this full exposition of the ground which he now occupies in respect to his theory, it is obviously a matter of but subordinate importance, whether or not, antecedently, he fairly might have been, and really wished to be regarded as believing and affirming its truth. It is worth inquiry chiefly for the aid it may furnish in determining what degree

of confidence can be felt that his genuine intentions are to be certainly known from any of the expositions which he has chosen to make of them. The question to be determined then is, whether his readers were fairly authorized, by the language and representations of his sermon and note, to regard him as really believing the theory of which he there gave them a statement, explanation, and defence; as desiring to convince them of its title to their acceptance and belief; and wishing it to be adopted and employed by them, for the purpose of freeing "the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity?"

To form then a just judgment on the subject, it should in the first place be borne in mind, that neither the sermon nor note presented any statement or intimation that he did not regard his theory as indubitably expressive of the fact, and wish to be considered as holding it and desiring its adoption by others. "Not a hint is given" that he could possibly receive it as such a trespass on decorum and outrage on right, to interpret him as really believing it, and meaning by his explanations of its import and efforts at its defence, to commend it to the faith of his readers. It was not until he felt "the pressure of new objections," that he had recourse to this expedient to accomplish their "effectual refutation," and convert them into "evasions." What possible ground then had his readers to take it for granted, or conjecture, that he had really no confidence himself in the accuracy of his theory, nor wish that it should meet any acceptance from others? What less than a gross impeachment of his good sense and sincerity would it have been, without any authority for it from him, to have assumed or suspected that he had put forth such a scheme, and on such an occasion, without having himself any faith in its repre-

sentations, or deeming it even creditable or safe to claim for it the character of truth? And especially what less than such a disparagement of his discretion could it have been, to have supposed that without any inducement from a conviction of its truth, he could have wantonly advanced a theory so obviously adapted to excite apprehensions respecting his orthodoxy, when, as he states in his preface, it was one of his objects in "the selection of the topic," and "publication of the sermon," to counteract suspicions that were extensively entertained, that he had departed in his articles of "doctrinal belief from his revered instructor, the former president of the college?" Could it be credible without the most "absolutely decisive evidence," that he would have added to these suspicions, and yielded them complete justification, by the promulgation of any new doctrine, unless he had the fullest conviction of its truth, and felt it to be imperiously his duty to give it publicity? His readers plainly had no alternative therefore, but either to regard him as advancing his theory, solely because he felt fully assured of its truth and adaptation to answer the end for which it was constructed, and thence desired it to become an article of the general faith; or else to abandon all respect for his judgment.

Nor had they in the next place any alternative, but either to interpret him as regarding his theory with these sentiments, and prompted by them to its publication, or else to construe him as admitting, as he now has in effect, that there are no materials within our grasp but those of groundless assumptions, for meeting the objections that are offered to the conduct of God in the permission of sin; and thus yielding to "the enemies of revelation and divine decrees," the whole extent of their claims. He fully admits "the facts

on which the objection rests," respecting the introduction of sin into the divine kingdom,—that God brought "a race of creatures into existence, and gave them such *a nature*, that they will all certainly sin and incur his wrath,"—"that the objection alluded to in the discourse commonly rises in the mind in connexion with the subject," and is fraught "as it is extensively regarded" with great "difficulties,"—that that was the reason "that it was thought proper to notice it," and finally, that "he knows of no refutation" of that "objection," "except the one given" in his theory. To have supposed therefore, that after all, he had no confidence in the truth of that theory, and did not consider it as entitled to credence, would have been to have interpreted him as clearly regarding the objection as utterly unanswerable, and openly pronouncing the conduct of the Holy One of Israel in the permission of sin, to be incapable of vindication. There certainly however was no intimation in the sermon or note, that could authorize his readers to draw such a conclusion, or indulge any suspicion that such could be the fact. All his representations, on the contrary, placed them under the utmost necessity of regarding him as wholly disbelieving and denying the justice of the objection, as putting forth his theory for the purpose of refuting it, and as possessed of a full conviction that he had accomplished his object. He states expressly, that the "assumption that God could have adopted a moral system and prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin," "is wholly unauthorized as the basis of the present objection, and *the objection itself groundless;*" offers it as "an apology" for his note, that "he was desirous of attempting still further to free the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity," and affirms that "this is done in his view, by dismissing from the

mind the two assumptions which have been examined ;" and finally, that "he knows of no refutation except the one given." Could his readers then, with these declarations under their eye, have possibly felt themselves authorized and constrained to regard him after all, as having no conviction of the truth of his theory, nor confidence in its title to general acceptance? Could they, against all these manifestations of his sentiments, have claimed with the least show of justice, that by his placing his theory in the form of a "hypothetical statement," instead of a "positive assertion," they were forced to the conclusion, that he not only had no belief that that statement had any correspondence with fact, but in truth fully admitted the unanswerableness of the objection, which it was its object to refute ?

But the declaration itself, so often repeated by him, that the "assumption that God could have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin," "is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized," incapable of proof by "the least particle of evidence," "and ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument," is fully equivalent to a formal assertion of the truth of his theory. There clearly is no medium between God's being able to prevent all sin, or the present degree of sin, and not being able to prevent it ; any more than there is between his *really* possessing the attribute of power, and not possessing it at all. Nor is there any medium between *supposing* him to be able to prevent all sin or not to be able to prevent it, any more than there is between supposing that power is either in some degree or other an attribute of his nature, or is not such an attribute. These suppositions being the exact converse of each other, an affirmation of the one, is as specific a denial of the other. Does not he who affirms that God has a given degree of

power, deny the doctrine that he has no power whatever? Does not he who pronounces the assumption that God has a given degree of power to be wholly gratuitous, unauthorized, and groundless, incapable of proof by the least particle of evidence, either from the nature of the subject, or from known facts; and that therefore "no one has a right to assert the contrary, or even to *think* it," convey to his readers precisely as much and identically the same evidence that he ex animo believes the opposite proposition, as that he does not believe the assumption which he denounces? His condition must have become truly hopeless who feels that the maintenance of his cause requires the assertion of the contrary.

When then the reviewer affirms, that "the assumption that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or the present degree of sin, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized," he affirms with equal explicitness that the assumption that he could *not* have prevented all sin, is *not* gratuitous and unauthorized. When he asserts that the former is *groundless*, he equally asserts that the latter is *not* groundless. When he protests that "no one has a right to assert the contrary" of his "supposition," or "even to *think it*," he protests with equal earnestness that every one *has* a right to assert his supposition, and to regard it as true.

But that he penned the sermon and note under the fullest conviction that the rejection of the assumption which he pronounces to be groundless, was equivalent to the adoption of his theory, and that the positive denial of the truth of that assumption was identical with the "positive affirmation" of the truth of his hypothesis, is indisputably clear from his own representation. He says, "as an apology for his "note," that "while he knows of no refutation" of "the objection alluded

to in the discourse," "except the one given" in his supposition that God could not have prevented all sin, "he was desirous of attempting still further to free the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity;" and that "this is *done* in his own view, simply by dismissing from the mind the two assumptions which have been examined. The mode in which the mind will in this way be led to view the character and government of God, may it is believed be shown to be free from embarrassment, by an example." This example is that of a father who is supposed to place his sons at a public seminary, although he knows that he cannot there possibly prevent them from a course of vice; and is intended to illustrate "the procedure of God," according to the representation of his theory, in bringing a "race of creatures into existence," whom he cannot possibly prevent from "all sin, or at least the present degree of sin." We have thus his own specific assurance that "simply by dismissing from the mind the two assumptions which" he had "examined," his readers would, as a matter of course "in his own view," be led to contemplate "the character and government of God," in accordance with the representation of his theory. But he could not have thus regarded the adoption of his theory as necessarily involved in the rejection of the other, unless he had felt that there could be no medium between denying the assumption which he had undertaken to refute, and assenting to the truth of his hypothesis. He could scarcely therefore have given us, had he attempted it, any more convincing evidence than he thus has, that he regarded the rejection of that assumption, as involving inevitably the adoption of his theory, and every argument that proved the groundlessness and impropriety

of that assumption, as demonstrating with equal certainty the authenticity and accuracy of his.

Indubitable however as it is, that these were the convictions on which he proceeded in his sermon and note, yet when considerations like these were urged by Dr. Woods as the ground of his conclusion, that he meant to deny God's power to prevent all sin, he has thought proper to sneer at them as groundless assumptions, and "apologies" for imputing to him that meaning, that do not touch "the point in the least.'

"He has changed Dr. Taylor's question into an assertion,—his *hypothetical* statement into a *positive affirmation*. And on what pretence has he done this? Without a particle of evidence that Dr. Taylor meant any thing different from what he said. He has indeed shown that his opponent declines to receive the theory that 'sin is the necessary means of the greatest good,' until it be first proved that sin (as to God's prevention) was *not* like friction in the machine, a necessary incident to the existence of our system. But has he shown that Dr. Taylor any where maintains, or ever meant to intimate, that men *can* know enough on this subject to justify the positive affirmation, that sin *is* such a condition or incident? No: But he *supposes* this to be his meaning! And why? Because 'it is unreasonable to suppose that a man of his intellectual character had *no* opinion on a subject which he had studied so much!' But why may not Dr. Taylor's opinion be, that no man is authorized either to *affirm* or to *deny* that sin (as to its prevention by God) is a necessary incident to a moral system? and of course that all inquiry must stop here?"—p. 541.

After the developments he has made of the principles on which he interprets his own and the statements of others; no one perhaps will deem it worth while to determine or conjecture why "Dr. Taylor's opinion" may not be, that which he disowns, as well as that which he advocates; nor why it may not be, that he has no opinion at all even on

subjects which he has formally discussed, and in such a manner as "in his own view" to free them from "distressing and groundless perplexity." If he wishes however to know why his readers, "without a particle of evidence that Dr. Taylor meant any thing different from what he said," could not suppose that he had "*no opinion* on a subject which he had studied so much," the reason is, that he has positively, deliberately, and repeatedly *expressed* an opinion, and that consequently he cannot be supposed not to have any, without being regarded as guilty of extreme rashness and duplicity. And in like manner, if he desires to be informed why they cannot suppose that his opinion may not be, that "no man is authorized either to *affirm* or to *deny* that sin (as to its prevention by God) is a necessary incident to a moral system? and of course that all inquiry on the subject must stop here"? the answer is, that he has not chosen to stop his inquiries at this point, but has affirmed without limitation or reserve, that the assumption that "sin (as to its prevention by God) is" *not* "a necessary incident to a moral system," is wholly "gratuitous," "unauthorized," "groundless," and an "error."

"The *error* lies in the gratuitous assumption, that God could have adopted a moral system, and prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin." "On the supposition that the evil which exists, is in respect to divine prevention, incidental to the best possible system, and that notwithstanding the evil, God will secure the greatest good possible to him to secure, who can impeach either his wisdom, or his goodness, because evil exists? I say then, that as ignorance is incompetent to make an objection, and as no one knows that this supposition is not a matter of fact, no one has a right to assert the contrary, or even to think it."—*Sermon, p.* 29.

Here is an "*opinion*" expressed, that "the assumption that God could have adopted a moral system and prevented all sin," is an "error;" and "a positive affirmation," that "no one has a right to assert," "or even to think," that the contrary "supposition" "is *not* a matter of fact;" in other words, that every one is under obligation to *reject that* "*error*," and *take it for granted* that his "supposition" is expressive of the truth. And if "the assumption, that God could, in a moral system, have prevented all sin," "is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized," as he represents, "and ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument," is a "groundless assumption," and an "error," that involves the subject in "distressing perplexity," can any one doubt that we are not only "authorized to deny" it, but under the most imperious obligation to reject it, and use our utmost endeavours to induce our fellow men also to dismiss it from their minds? And if, on the other hand, "there is not the least particle of evidence that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is possible to God in the nature of things," and "no one has a right to assert," "or even to think" that it is; and if the supposition that it is not possible, frees "the subject from distressing perplexity," and leads the mind to view the character and government of God in a mode that frees them "from embarrassment," can there be any doubt of the propriety and obligation of affirming that supposition, and endeavouring to lead men to make it an article of belief? If the positive affirmations then, and denials which he has thus put forth on the subject, are authorized, it is clearly too late to inquire why it may not be that he has "no opinion on a subject which he has studied so much," nor why it may not be his opinion, that "no man is authorized either to affirm or to deny" the truth

of his supposition. He peremptorily determined this question long since, and in a manner that renders it quite incompatible with his obligations to disparage, as he now does, the importance of accurate views of the subject, and claim that it may be consistent with duty to suspend all inquiry, without adopting any determinate opinion respecting it. If he entertains the sentiments which he has expressed, he is clearly bound by the most sacred obligations to step forth, and unhesitatingly avow his faith in his theory, and strenuously affirm and maintain its truth, without any of the reservations and hypothetical statements with which he is now endeavouring to modify and disguise its claims to general belief. No obstacles which it might oblige him to encounter, nor sacrifices it might require, should deter him for an instant from this high duty. No very formidable difficulties, in fact, could rationally be expected to attend its fulfillment, nor any thing more than an ordinary degree of resolution and independence be supposed to be requisite for its discharge. No very uncommon share of courage can be imagined to be necessary to enable one either openly to disown and denounce "a groundless assumption," which "ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument;" or positively to avow and affirm a supposition, which no one can either disprove, or has a right to deny, either verbally or in thought. It would seem scarcely possible that any thing above the lowest extreme of timidity, could be withheld from it by any difficulties to which it could be thought capable of giving birth, and above all, by accusations that do not touch "the point in the least," and arguments that are nothing but "evasions." He, at all events, who can be frightened into even a smothered retraction of his favourite doctrines, by the terrors of what he

professes to regard as nothing more than a sham contest, shows himself to be but ill qualified to sustain the trials of the real "battles of orthodoxy."

The last consideration on which I shall dwell in proof that the reviewer put forth his theory with the fullest conviction of its truth, and wish that it should be made universally an article of belief, is the fact that he claims that its representations of the government of God are more just than those of any other theory, and more happily adapted to exert a propitious influence on his accountable subjects.

"And while the theory now proposed exhibits the providential government of God as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures, it also presents, as no other theory in the view of the writer does present, the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects."—*Sermon*, p. 34.

If these representations are expressive of his real sentiments, the conviction is irresistible that he must have desired and meant that his theory should be adopted as an article of belief, and acted on as a fixed and influential truth, under all the evils and temptations that attend our existence. If it does in truth, as he claims, exhibit "the providential government of God as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures," ought it not to be actually adopted, and made the instrument of exciting those obedient affections? Can it be rejected without obvious danger and extreme guilt? If it presents the moral government of God as fraught with a higher degree of perfection and glory than any other hypothesis, and is in truth the only one that does not impair its perfection, dim its glories, and obstruct its salutary influ-

ence, ought it not to be adopted, avowed, affirmed, inculcated, and enforced with all the energy that so momentous a theme can command? If these representations of its nature and tendency convey to us the views with which he actually regards it, the conclusion is likewise equally unavoidable, that he must have *considered* it as indisputably true, and entitled from its character to command an unhesitating belief. Can it be that false or merely conjectural views of God's moral administration, can impart to it a more perfect and glorious aspect, than those which are true, and give it a more efficacious influence over us than just apprehensions of its nature? Can the reviewer possibly wish his readers to interpret him as believing, that a false or groundless assumption can with any safety be made the basis of any of the duties enjoined by the Most High? and ought indeed to be adopted in preference to the truth itself, as more fruitful of excitements to piety and benevolence? Can it be that he can choose to be understood as openly traducing the administration of God, by representing that truth detracts from its perfection and overclouds its glory, and that the aid of an hypothesis that is admitted to be incapable of proof and groundless, is essential to its vindication? If not,—if unwilling to sanction this construction of his language, then his readers have no alternative but to regard him as having given publicity to his theory from the fullest conviction of its truth, and with the sole desire and intention of commending it to general belief.

That such also are the views with which he still continues to regard it, the same and similar considerations compel us to believe, notwithstanding all his efforts to conceal it, and maintain the theory in the attitude of a mere "hypothetical statement."

He presents us with a sufficiently significant indication

that such is the fact, in the zealous eulogy which he pronounces on Dr. Bellamy for having, as he represents, taught it with no other inconsistency, than such as occurred through mere "inadvertence."

"Should it appear, that in stating the question at issue, in many of his reasonings, and especially in answering objections to the perfection of the divine character and government, he has virtually adopted the position that sin, (in respect to the divine prevention) is *incidental* to the best system; then may his authority be appealed to with equal or even greater propriety, in support of the principles which we have advocated on this subject."

"We take leave of this treatise with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret,—pleasure to find Dr. Bellamy meeting the enemies of divine sovereignty on that vantage ground which we think ought never to be relinquished;—regret, that in any instance he should yield it to his opponents, and be thus driven to adopt a theory which made him inconsistent with himself." p. 531, 539.

But the "ground" on which Dr. Bellamy proceeded in meeting his opponents, was indisputably—not that of a mere "hypothetical statement," or assumption that was admitted to be incapable of proof—but of positions fully believed, positively affirmed, and boldly maintained as truths, placed utterly above the regions of mere conjecture or supposition, by the clearest demonstrations of reason, and most indubitable decisions of the divine word. Such is his own representation in his preface.

"A chief design of the following sermons is to rectify these mistaken notions and apprehensions"—that it is "the greatest absurdity in nature to suppose that God really thought it best in the whole, that sin ever should exist in the world he had made;"—"*not by proposing mere theories*, but by turning the reader to a certain light, which shines in this dark and benighted world, the only sure

guide we poor mortals have, and to which we do well to give heed. I mean the holy scriptures, but for which I think we might have groped in total darkness as to this particular, unable ever to have extricated ourselves." p. 3.

The doctrine then which Dr. Bellamy taught on this subject—whatever it was—he taught as a doctrine of God, certainly and indisputably demonstrated by the voice of inspiration itself, and possessing as complete claims to be made an article of belief as any of the truths of revelation. The wretched artifice of relying on groundless assumptions, and mere "hypothetical statements," which cannot be positively affirmed, nor "supported by absolutely decisive evidence," he totally disclaimed, and denounced as utterly inadequate to extricate the subject from the difficulties with which it is perplexed. It is this doctrine thus professedly taught as incontrovertibly a doctrine of revelation, that the reviewer affirms, is nothing else than his hypothesis; and it was because he flattered himself—as he has attempted to show,—that Dr. Bellamy had met "the enemies of divine sovereignty on that vantage ground," which he thinks "ought never to be relinquished," that he felt pleasure at taking "leave of the treatise;" and that "in any instance" he had yielded it to his opponents, and was thus driven to adopt a theory which made him "inconsistent with himself," that that pleasure was intermingled with any degree of "regret." How then is his utterance of these eulogies to be regarded, unless they were put forth with the fullest conviction that the theory, on which Dr. Bellamy is thus represented to have relied for the vindication of the divine government, indisputably enjoys that character of truth and certainty, which Dr. Bellamy himself ascribed to his doc-

trine? Does the reviewer deem it to be befitting his office, thus to sanction and commend attempts at vindicating the conduct of the Most High, by hypotheses and assumptions that have no claims to authority from his word, or support from facts? Can he deem it compatible with the interests or obligations of religion, to resort to such expedients for the justification of the ways of God to men, and thus virtually admit, that they are incapable of vindication by the instrumentality of truth? If not—and if at the same time he has no conviction of the truth of the hypothesis which he affirms Dr. Bellamy employed for the purpose of meeting the enemies of revelation and divine decrees, how is it that he uttered these eulogies, without any expression of disapproval that Dr. Bellamy claimed for his theory the clear and indubitable sanction of the word of God; and restricted his regret to the circumstance, that "in any instance he should yield" "that vantage ground which we think ought never to be relinquished?" "to his opponents, and be thus driven to adopt a theory which made him inconsistent with himself?" And how is it that he felt himself authorized to pronounce him, for resorting to such rash and reprehensible expedients—if such they are regarded, as they should be if no assurance is felt that the hypothesis is true—entitled to "the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments?"

We are forced then irresistibly to the conclusion—unless we impeach the reviewer's discretion, and regard him as ready to sanction and eulogize any thing, however reprehensible it may be in his own judgment, that yields even a temporary countenance to his system—that he uttered these commendations from a hearty approval of the scheme itself which he ascribes to Dr. Bellamy, and of the manner

also in which he taught it, if he taught it at all. And we are carried by an equal necessity to the conviction, that so far is he from regarding the claims with which Dr. B. put forth the theory—whatever it was—which he taught, with disapprobation, that he would have felt still intenser "pleasure" and self-gratulation had he been really able to produce any proofs from "the treatise," that Dr. Bellamy actually held the scheme which he imputes to him, and formally taught it as a doctrine of God. Who can doubt that if a solitary syllable unquestionably demonstrative of the justice of such a charge, could have been discovered on Dr. Bellamy's pages, it would have been blazoned forth to the world with the utmost triumph, and drawn from the reviewer still stronger expressions of the praise which his "admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments?"

We are borne to the same conclusion in like manner by the fact, that when pressed with the objection by Dr. Woods, he has no where thought proper to give any denial or intimation that his theory is not the object of his full belief; but merely attempted to shield himself from responsibility for teaching it, and escape the task of meeting the objections to which it is obnoxious, by the pretence that he has not positively *affirmed* its truth, but merely offered it as a "hypothetical statement:" as though the question at issue between him and Dr. Woods was merely, whether "the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College," had placed an interrogation point, a period, a note of exclamation, or some other equally significant sign at the end of his sentences, and the whole sense and intention of his language was concentrated within those marks. The only question however of any moment which he was called on to answer was, whether he had not placed his readers under a necessity of

interpreting him as fully believing his theory, and as having given it to the public from a conviction of its truth, and with the wish and hope of rendering it an article of general belief. For if such were the fact, Dr. Woods' representations were abundantly authorized, and in place of having met and overthrown them by affirming that they do not touch "the point," he has only shown that after all his professions of desire to bring back the clergy of New-England to apostolic methods of preaching, and lead them to "view the character and government of God," in such a mode as to free them "from embarrassment," and given birth for that purpose to his theory, which "presents as no other theory" in his "view does present, the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory;" he still has not courage enough to look his own doctrine in the face, acknowledge it as an article of his belief, and take upon himself the responsibility of defending its pretensions against the objections to which it is obnoxious.

If then he does not in fact regard his hypothesis as true, and wish it to be adopted as such by others, how is it to be "accounted for," that when thus called on to meet Dr. Woods' representations and objections founded on that construction of his meaning, he did not openly disavow all faith in it, and give his readers at once to understand that he did not deem it entitled either to his or their credence? Why limit himself to the denial that he had ever positively *affirmed that it is true*, and thereby leave the whole question respecting his belief or disbelief of it, and intentions in its publication, totally undetermined? Why not state that he had never believed it to be true, as well as that he had never said that it is? that he had never designed or desired that it should become an article of faith, as well as that he had

never said that it should? Can any believe that he neglected this simple, natural, efficacious, and if authorized by fact, only appropriate method of terminating the controversy on this point, for any other reason than that the theory is in reality the object of his full belief, and the medium through which he contemplates the providential and moral government of God, and makes the one, "in his own view," "the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures," and the other a means "to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects?"

That such is the fact, we are furnished in the review under notice with still further evidences of the same character, as those that have been already noticed. Thus, in the following passage, he openly avows the conviction—on which he obviously proceeded in all his former discussions on the subject—that there is no medium between the rejection of the groundless assumption, "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," which it was his object to refute, and the adoption of his theory.

"Dr. W. maintains that God could have secured universal holiness in a moral system. 'If then,' said Dr. T. 'it be conceded that holiness is on the whole preferable to sin in its stead, it must be also conceded, that God is not good enough to accomplish all the good in his power.' For if God can secure universal holiness, and if universal holiness would result in the highest happiness, then why does not God secure universal holiness? This is the question for Dr. W. to answer. *No alternative remains*, but either *to admit that sin in respect to divine prevention is incidental to the best system*, or to *adhere* to the position, that sin in every instance of its occurrence, is on the whole *better than holiness in its stead.*"—p. 555.

We thus have his "positive affirmation," that there is no alternative but either to admit the truth of his hypothesis,

or adhere to the doctrine that sin is in every instance of its occurrence, better than holiness in its stead; which he denounces as an "error," and a groundless assumption, that "ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument." But if the relations of these two hypotheses are thus such, that there is no alternative but to admit and adhere to either one or the other of them, then it is equally certain that there is no alternative to those who reject the dogma, "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," but to admit and adhere to the reviewer's theory, "that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is" "impossible" "to God in the nature of things;" and accordingly, to regard every argument advanced by him to refute that dogma, as equally designed and adapted to prove the truth of his hypothesis, and every positive manifestation of his total disbelief and rejection of the former, as an equally positive affirmation of his full faith in the latter;—or, in one word, to consider the amount of evidence that he *ex animo* believes, and conscientiously maintains the truth of his theory, and desires it to become an article of universal belief, as exactly coincident with the evidence which he has given, that he rejects the other hypothesis.

If a shade of doubt can yet remain in any mind of the truth of this conclusion, it must be finally obliterated by the following passage:

"Here, too, we might ask, what possible reason can there be for adopting Dr. Woods' scheme? Is there not at least as much reason to suppose that the divine power is restricted by the nature of *free agency*, as by the nature of *sin?* From the nature of the former, such a limitation *may* result; for a free agent can sin in defiance of any preventing influence; and it is as we have seen, impossible to prove *a priori* that he will not sin. But do the known nature, ten-

dencies, or relations of *sin*, furnish a particle of evidence that God could not produce greater good by means of holiness in its stead?

"Whence, then, the reluctance to admit that the limitation may possibly result from free agency instead of sin? Will the perfection of God's moral government be impaired? Or rather, is there not a peculiar glory imparted to it by this theory, as it unfolds the *sincerity* of his commands and invitations as a lawgiver, and creates a peculiar *responsibility* on the part of his subjects, to yield a ready obedience to an entreating sovereign? Is the providential government of God, or the universality of his providential purposes obscured? These extend to all events on this scheme, and form the same basis for submission and prayer, confidence and joy, under the perfect dominion of God, which exists on the other. Are the reasons for humiliation and ingenuous repentance on the part of sinners, less real or less apparent? Or rather, does not this theory present the *only rational foundation* for these christian virtues, and urge to their exercise by the melting tenderness and solicitude of paternal love? And what, too, we ask, is the comparative bearing of the two schemes on Atheism, Infidelity, Universalism, Arminianism, &c.? Which scheme is it that furnishes the supposed infallible principle, that an omnipotent and benevolent God *could* prevent all evil, if he would, and thus supports the inference of one, that therefore *there is no such God;*—the inference of another, that the book which reveals so clearly the eternal misery of so many of his creatures, is not from Him;—and the inference of a third, that this book does not and cannot contain such declarations;—or of a fourth, that the decrees or purposes of God do not extend to all actual events? Whose philosophy, or rather theology is it, that furnishes the premises for these conclusions?"—p. 568, 569.

He thus again gives us to understand that he regards "this theory" as imparting "a peculiar glory" to the moral government of God, and presenting "the only rational foundation" for the "christian virtues" of "humiliation and ingenuous repentance." It results therefore unavoidably—unless he believes that he can conceive of a moral government more gloriously perfect than that which the

Most High is exercising,—that he must regard his theory as exhibiting it, in its actual relations and character, and as being itself therefore in literal accordance with truth. And unless he denies that there is in fact any "rational foundation" for the "christian virtues" of "humiliation and ingenuous repentance," and thence that any such rational virtues are in reality ever exercised, the conclusion is equally inevitable, that he regards his theory as literally expressive of the truth. He has given his readers a right to the inference likewise that he disbelieves that those "christian virtues" are ever rationally exercised by any except those who exert them on the foundation of his theory.

These proofs, however, of his full conviction of the truth of his hypothesis, are of light significance compared with those which he presents in the representation that "the scheme" which teaches "that an omnipotent and benevolent God *could* prevent all evil, if he *would*," "*supports* the inference" of the atheist that "*there is no such God*;" —of the infidel, that the scriptures are not a revelation from him,—of the universalist, that they do not teach the doctrine of future punishment—and of the arminian, that his "decrees or purposes" "do not extend to all events." For if, as he here gives his readers to understand, he verily believes that the doctrine "that an omnipotent and benevolent God could prevent all evil if he would," *authorizes* the several inferences of the atheist, the infidel, the universalist, and the arminian, that there is no such God, no such divine revelation as the scriptures purport to be, and no such revealed doctrines as those of future punishment, and the divine purposes—as he must believe, unless he has deliberately uttered the worst imputation on the doctrine of his opponents that language can express, with a consciousness

of its total injustice,—then we have proof that his belief is that his theory expresses the exact truth respecting God and his government, as ample and demonstrative, as we have that he ex animo believes in the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent God, in the inspiration of the scriptures, and in the doctrines of divine purposes and future punishment.

Every consideration which concerns the subject, thus carries us inevitably to the conclusion, that his hypothesis is the object of his full and perfect belief. There are—to sum up the whole argument—but three suppositions that can be formed respecting the question ; that he has no opinion whatever on the subject—that he does not regard his theory as having any foundation in truth—or that he believes it to be literally expressive of the fact.

We cannot suppose him not to have any opinion on the subject; inasmuch as he has positively expressed one, in almost every paragraph and sentence of the discussion, and alleged it as the reason and made it the foundation of his whole argumentation ; and that to make that supposition, therefore, were to suppose him to have deliberately given publicity to views and sentiments of the most momentous import, on the most momentous subjects, without having any belief of their accuracy or attaching any importance to their character, and to have trifled alike accordingly with the obligations of morality, the sanctions of religion, and the sense of his readers.

It were to disparage his judgment too, as well as his rectitude, and render it utterly inexplicable that he has intermeddled in the discussion, or exhibited any interest whatever in the subject. What rational or imaginable inducement can he have had to volunteer the expression of one set of opinions, and the refutation of another, and thus ex-

pose himself to the danger of defeat, and subject himself to the imputation of heresy, if he in truth has no settled opinion on the subject? We however are not left to this conclusion alone from the general laws of moral agency, though so obviously just, but have his explicit testimony for its corroboration; as he formally and zealously disclaims all sinister intentions in the adoption and publication of his views, and protests that they neither ought, nor can with any plausibility, be imputed to any thing else than a conscientious conviction of their truth and importance.

"The view of sin or moral depravity maintained in this discourse, cannot be justly ascribed to mental perversion, or to any sinister or selfish design. For what possible motive or object can be assigned as the cause of perverting truth and evidence in such a case? If popularity were the object, the charges of having departed from the true faith by renouncing former opinions, repeated from one end of the land to the other, show at least in respect to some of us, how ill-judged has been this expedient to gain popularity. Nor is this view of sin adopted for the sake of rejecting any one doctrine of orthodoxy, or of setting up any anti-orthodox peculiarity. For they who adopt this view, as fully believe in the certainty of the universal and entire sinfulness of mankind—they as fully believe this sinfulness or depravity to be *by nature*—they as fully believe in the inefficacy of moral suasion, and in the necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency in regeneration, as any other men." "The charge then of adopting this view of sin, for the purpose of opposing any doctrine of orthodoxy, is a slanderous charge.

"Can any cause of mental perversion be fairly charged? The human mind pervert truth and evidence for the sake of believing that to be sin, which it is agreed on all hands, imparts to sin its most malignant aspect, and reveals its fellest tendencies? Men believe that to be sin, which deserves the deepest damnation which any thing can deserve, merely because they wish to believe it! You may as well suppose that for a similar reason, a man should believe his doom

already fixed in hell itself." "Such a view of sin is not a device to obtain popularity—nor to corrupt the gospel of God."—*Serm.* pp. 27, 28.

These remarks then, though not uttered with sole reference to the theory under consideration, are equally applicable, and were doubtless meant to be applied, to his conduct in respect to that, and fully sustain the conclusions respecting it, which have just been expressed. Their application to that, is indeed fully sanctioned by his representation that the theory corroborates and gives still higher intensity to the views of sin to which he here refers, by creating "a peculiar responsibility on the part of his subjects, to yield a ready obedience to an entreating sovereign," and presenting "the only rational foundation" for the "christian virtues" of "humiliation and ingenuous repentance on the part of sinners." We have thus his own authority for regarding him as having advanced the views which he has on these various topics—not from any insidious or sinister design whatever—but solely because they are views which he actually entertains, and deems of high importance.

Nor for precisely the same and many additional reasons, can he be supposed to have given publicity to his theory, without having any faith in its truth. That were equally to detract from his discretion, and to impeach him of the most reprehensible practice as well as the worst of sinister intentions. But he cannot any more wish or consent that we should adopt either of these branches of the trilemma, than we can desire to be forced to such conclusions. The only alternative is therefore to regard him as having been prompted through the whole of his discussion respecting it, by as full and perfect a conviction of its truth, as he has of the truth of the other articles of his theological creed.

This conclusion however, more propitious to him as it is, than either of the other alternatives, yet presents, it must be confessed, the expedients for defence to which he has resorted in his reply to Dr. Woods, in a light that is far from flattering. His efforts to escape responsibility for his theory and evade the objections with which it is perplexed, by the pretence that he had never positively affirmed it to be "a matter of fact," but only offered it as a "hypothetical statement," can scarcely be interpreted, in consistency with it, as the offspring of zeal for what he regards as the truth, or honored with the praise which our admiration confers on the "highest intellectual attainments." Nor will it allow us any more to yield the credit of discretion and candor to his complaints of injustice in Dr. Woods, in interpreting his hypothetical statement as equivalent to an intentional affirmation of the truth of his theory. We have already seen indeed that he is not wholly incapable "under the pressure of new objections," of raising the cry of "evasion," when resorting to it himself; nor of imputing to another the injustice of which he is the sole perpetrator. Notwithstanding all these artifices however, Dr. Woods' representations must continue to be authorized, and his argumentation remain unrefuted and irrefutable, until the reviewer shall subvert the foregoing conclusion, and demonstrate beyond disputation that he has neither ever believed his theory, nor given to his readers just occasion to regard him as believing it, and prompted to its publication and defence, by a conviction of its truth, and wish to promote its adoption by others.

It now remains to look at the grounds on which his hypothesis relies for support, and to trace its relations to the doctrines of the gospel.

And in the first place, the reviewer not only has not demonstrated its truth, but zealously protests, as we have seen, that he has never even ascribed to it that character, nor ventured to intimate that it is capable of direct proof. This utter and admitted absence of all decisive evidence of its accuracy, ought, one would imagine, to have excluded it for ever from his theological speculations, and caused its total rejection. Far different, however, are his apprehensions. He strenuously claims the right of assuming that it may be true, and employing it for the purpose of freeing the measures of the divine government from distressing perplexity, until his opponents shall prove it to be false; and with equal vehemence, on the other hand, denies to them the right, until they shall have demonstrated the error of his assumption, either of asserting the truth of their hypothesis, or even thinking it to be true.

"Now this is the way in which *we* would meet the opponents of revelation and divine decrees, when they demand a solution of the difficulties involved in the existence of moral evil. *We throw the question back to them.* We deny their right to ask any solution whatever, until they have first proved, that the fact in question is not (as to its entire prevention by God) a 'condition' or necessary 'incident,' in some part of any possible moral system. We do not affirm that it is so. The burden of proof does not rest on us. But we will not grant them this preliminary fact, on which their whole objection turns, until they have proved it. And we say, that all theory, all speculation on the subject must stop, until this fact *is* proved."—*p.*533.

"I say then, that as ignorance is incompetent to make an objection, and as no one knows that this supposition is not a matter of fact, no one has a right to assert the contrary, or even to think it."—*Sermon*, *p.* 29.

It would seem from the tone of confidence in which these declarations are uttered, that he regards himself in this po-

sition as completely impregnable. An assumption more utterly unauthorized however, more singularly ridiculous, or totally at variance with the pretence on which he relies to escape the "statement" of Dr. Woods, cannot easily be imagined. How has it happened, that "the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College," can have become possessed of the extraordinary right,—without daring to affirm that they are true, or venturing to intimate that they are "capable of direct proof,"—to take it for granted that his assertions and denials on topics of such infinite moment, are "a matter of fact," and to call thus on the world at large to submit, without resistance or question, to his authoritative decisions, until they shall be shown to be erroneous? Has he exhibited any proofs in his discussions, of such "gigantic strength of mind," or such knowledge or candour, as to give him any better ground than his opponents, to claim that his hypothesis shall be believed without evidence? Is there any thing more in his assumption that God cannot prevent all sin, than in theirs that he can, that can entitle it to be implicitly received until it is proved to be false? Can he give any better reason that the burden of proof does not rest on him, than they can that it does not rest on them? Can he offer any better reason for setting up such claims in regard to this, than any of the other subjects which his controversies affect:—the doctrines of Bellamy, Edwards, Dwight, "the true usus loquendi," the use "of the means of regeneration," "the suspension of the selfish principle," the doctrine of perpetual perceptions and volitions? Can he exhibit any juster ground for demanding this implicit submission to his authority in matters of faith, than can Catholics, Universalists, Unitarians, or Atheists, that their

respective doctrines shall be admitted to be true, until shown to be false?

A more consummate farce than this vaunted expedient of throwing the question back to his opponents, and denying their right either to ask any solution of it whatever, or even "to think" for themselves, till they have disproved his hypothesis, cannot well be conceived. This part of the "vantage ground" of his system thus proves, on being explored, to consist in the assumption, that mankind are under obligation to admit the theory of "the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College," and yield up their right even to indulge any conceptions that are at variance with his "hypothetical statement," till that shall have been proved not to be "a matter of fact:" and that cannot be, it would seem, until he shall himself condescend to subvert his own system;—as if he is to enjoy the sole right of either asserting or even thinking "the contrary," his assumption can never be disproved by others, without a trespass on his privilege, and a violation of their obligations. And he has allowed himself to believe, it would appear, that his readers would really find themselves constrained thus to resign their reason, judgment, consciences, and faith, to his arbitrary dictation, without a question or scruple. If this is the only instrument, however, on which he relies for the support of his system, he will find some difficulty, I suspect, in sustaining its claims. However supple disciples his pupils may prove, men of sense will be likely to take the liberty to throw his theory back to him, and ask for some proof of its truth, or some better evidence of their obligation to submit to his arbitrary lordship, before they yield this implicit faith to his hypothesis.

These pretences appear scarcely less ridiculous, when

contrasted with the loud complaints with which they are conjoined, that Dr. Woods has totally misrepresented him, in conducting the discussion as though he had directly taught that God cannot prevent all sin in a moral system. One of the chief reasons of his dissatisfaction with this "statement of the question at issue," appears to be, that it is an encroachment on his exclusive right, and devolves on him a necessity of proving his doctrine.

"Dr. Woods then, without the shadow of a reason, has changed the fundamental position of Dr. Taylor, on which the whole discussion turns, into another and a different one, which he has never maintained. The advantage thus gained is indeed obvious. It relieves him *from the burden of proof*."—p. 542.

He has never, it seems, "maintained" his theory by formally attempting to demonstrate its truth. He has only placed it on the basis of a self-evident proposition that needs no proof, and claimed exemption from all obligation positively to affirm or evince it to be "a matter of fact," on the ground that his opponents are neither able to disprove it, nor have any right to ask for any demonstration of its accuracy. This, however, it appears, is not to utter a positive affirmation of it. It is only to exhibit it in the form of a "hypothetical statement."

The assumptions and arguments by which he attempts to show that the main doctrine of his theory—that God cannot prevent all sin, or at least the present degree of sin in a moral system—can never be proved to be false, are fraught with equal error and absurdity; and indicate but a slight knowledge of the nature of moral agency on which they profess to be founded. They are all erected on "the groundless assumption," that the mere capacity for exerting

volitions, alone determines, or *may* alone determine, the mode in which that power is exerted, or the species and series of volitions which are put forth.

" This is the task then which devolves on Dr. Woods, viz. to prove that God could have kept all sin, or the present degree of sin, out of a universal moral system.

" Now we say, that this is a task which Dr. Woods cannot accomplish; and for this very obvious reason, that the nature of the case absolutely precludes all proof, being one which *may* involve a palpable self-contradiction. It will not be denied, that free moral agents *can* do wrong, under every possible influence to prevent it. The *possibility* of a contradiction in supposing them to be prevented from doing wrong is, therefore, demonstrably certain. Free moral agents *can* do wrong, under all possible preventing influence. Using their powers as they *may* use them, they will sin; and no one can show that some such agents *will* not use their powers as they *may* use them. But to suppose them to use their powers as they *may* use them, and yet to suppose them to be *prevented* from sinning, would be to suppose them both to sin and to be prevented from sinning at the same time; which is a contradiction."—p. 563.

The representation thus is, that as the power of exerting sinful volitions remains unimpaired, under every possible influence to prevent its being exerted in that mode, therefore no certainty can be constituted, nor without self-contradiction be imagined to be constituted by that influence, that it will not actually give birth to those volitions;—that the supposition of its being really *prevented* by that influence from exerting them, is fraught with intrinsic and palpable absurdity. But this is obviously to affirm, that it *may* be that the moral influence under which the mind acts, is not the means of determining the choices which it puts forth, but that it exerts its volitions in " spite," or wholly independently and irrespective of all such influence. This,

however, is to assert, that its power itself of exerting volitions, may be the sole ground or reason of its putting forth those volitions which it does; and if this may be the fact in any degree, it clearly can never be shown that it is not the fact in all instances.

This assumption—in which the reader will recognise the Arminian dogma of the self-determining power of the will—is admirably fitted, from the blank and hopeless inattention which it indicates, to the nature of moral agency, to be joined in its intimate association with that which we have just dismissed from our consideration. The slightest glance at the subject will show that it not only does not possess a shade of truth or probability, but is fraught with utter and irreconcilable contradiction to both. To suppose it to express the fact, were indeed to suppose the powers of moral agency annihilated, or utterly reversed in their nature, and every thing like certainty, truth and morals blotted from existence. The mere power of exerting choices, not only does not solely determine the mode in which it is exerted, or constitute the reason that precisely those volitions are put forth, which are, in place of others; but it has no voice or influence whatever in that determination; as the mind is prompted to exert those choices, exclusively by the moral influence which excites it to action. This fact is demonstrable from the nature itself of volitions, and is the subject of universal consciousness, is a first principle in metaphysics, lies at the foundation of all religion, morals, government, and persuasion, and has been acted on by every moral being in the universe, in every voluntary act, from the foundation of the world, and will ever continue to be. What kind of volition would that be, which should be put forth wholly irrespective of the object chosen or rejected, and without any connexion

whatever with or relation to the mind's perceptions and emotions, and be accordingly a mere unintelligent and mechanical effect of a physical cause? A more extraordinary complication of contradictions to fact, reason, and religion, than lies wrapped up in this vaunted position, cannot easily be conceived. If it may be that it is the capacity solely to exert volitions, and not the motives under whose influence they are put forth, that determines moral beings in their choices, then it obviously may be that there has never been but one and identically the same reason—that capacity—for all the diversified volitions that have ever been put forth; and that motives, accordingly, have never had any agency whatever throughout this immense series and infinite diversity of voluntary actions. But if the whole reason of choices always is or may be identically the same, how happens it that the choices themselves exhibit such an endless dissimilarity, and accord, too, in all instances, with the nature of the moral influence under which they are exerted?

If this main "pillar and ground" of the reviewer's system is correct, we clearly can have no certainty that the ends which men apparently seek in their agency, are really in any instance the objects at which they aim. What we are accustomed to denominate their designs, may have no existence whatever. We have no possible clue to their intentions, nor any evidence that they ever have any aims that can involve a moral character. The distinctions between virtue and vice, religion and irreligion, innocence and guilt, are "wholly gratuitous and unauthorized, and ought never to be made the basis of an objection, or an argument." The murderer cannot be convicted of having acted with malice prepense; for no means exist for demonstrating either with certainty or probability, that the mo-

tives that were acting on him, had any influence in determining him to the crime for which he is arraigned. His volition may have sprung forth from his mere power of making choices, without any end whatever. Nor are there any means of determining that there is any morality in any of our volitions. If they are not exerted for the moral reasons involved in the motives that are present to the mind, when they are put forth, they clearly cannot be for any such reasons whatever: but must take place instinctively, or by a mere blind and unintelligent impulse. Does this doctrine correspond with the reviewer's experience? Does he ever find volitions springing up in his mind without any connexion with his perception or emotions? Is he conscious that he has no moral reasons for the choices which he puts forth? If this part of his metaphysical system exhibits a true picture of his own voluntary agency, and he reasons from that, to the nature and agency of others, how is it that he undertook in the sermon to shield himself from the suspicion of "mental perversion" and "sinister motives" in the adoption of his peculiar views, on the ground that men are solely actuated in their agency by motives, and cannot without slander, be accused of conduct for which no rational inducements exist? Did he ever address his fellow-men on the assumption that motives may have no influence in determining their agency? Is it this part of his theory that "presents the moral government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects," by representing that possibly it may never exert a shade of influence on his creatures throughout the whole range of their existence? But it cannot be necessary to dwell at greater length on this new modification of Arminianism, which has been refuted

so frequently by the "respectable theological writers of New-England" in their controversies with "the enemies of divine decrees." To have reproduced it at the present day, and set it forth as an irresistible instrument of beating down the identical scheme of which it is the chief foundation and main pillar, and lauded it to the skies as the very vantage ground of truth, from which alone any successful onset can be made on the enemies of revelation and the universal purposes and providence of God, is a climax of absurdity of which it may safely be believed, no one but the "Dwight professor of theology in Yale College" is capable. It is of this assumption which thus embodies in itself the whole essence of Arminianism, that he inquires in such a menacing tone— "on this point, is it presumptuous to bid defiance to the powers of human reason?" How he could have set them more thoroughly at defiance, is a matter of no ordinary difficulty to imagine. What "dungeon was ever more firmly barred, or more deeply dark, than all the inner chambers of the soul, when under the active tyranny of this principle? How profoundly conscience [common sense] sleeps!" It is this grand point—the doctrine of a self-determining power of the mind—for which Clark, Whitby, Taylor of Norwich, and West of New-Bedford contended so zealously, that he so confidently affirms Dr. Woods can never disprove.

He has thus founded his unqualified assertion that no one can prove that God can prevent all sin, on a total misconception of the nature of free agency, and of the causes that determine moral beings in their volitions; having conducted his argument respecting it, and erected his whole hypothesis on "the groundless assumption," that power to exert choices, really is, or may be, the only thing to be re-

garded, in determining the question whether a certainty can be constituted beforehand of the manner in which beings will act, or an agency exerted on them that shall infallibly sway them to a given course of conduct;—whereas in truth, their mere power to exert volitions, is not even among the considerations that concern that question, any more than the power of walking has any thing to do in determining the direction in which its possessor shall walk, or than the power of a steam-engine has any concern with the inquiry whether the vessel which it propels, shall move east or west, north or south. Were his assumption correct, the only mode in which God could prevent a being from sinning, would be that of divesting him of his powers of moral agency, by converting him into an idiot, or blotting him from existence; and that is obviously the reviewer's conception of the subject; as his hypothesis represents the Most High as having no alternative, but either to create a universe of beings of such a nature as to render it impossible to prevent them from sin, or to create no moral system whatever.

Why however the powers of moral agency should be imagined to present any obstacle to their possessor's being controlled in their exercise, it is difficult to conceive. Those powers must of course be possessed in their "unimpaired perfection," in order to their being exerted in moral choices and are identically the same when exerted in volition, as antecedently and subsequently, and the same whether the choices put forth are obedient or sinful. If then no violence whatever is done to them, in their being *exerted* in putting forth any supposable volition, how can any such violence or injury be involved, in their being *excited* to any supposable volition, by motives, under whose influ-

ence, if presented to them, it will be in perfect accordance with their nature to exert that choice? But if it is not inconsistent with their nature to put forth such a volition when under the excitement of those motives, and if the influence itself of the motives involves no injury to their nature, nor obstruction to their legitimate exercise, how can *their presentation* itself involve any such obstruction, or injury? But if neither their influence nor introduction to the mind, can present any obstacle to their legitimate exertion, how can any be imagined to be involved, in there being a previous certainty that those identical motives will be presented at that instant, and exert that identical influence? These clearly were the questions which it became the reviewer to settle, before uttering his "positive affirmation," that no one can ever prove that God could in a moral system prevent all sin. He now, not only has not demonstrated his assertion, nor advanced any thing that can lend it any support, but he has not even approached the real point at issue, in any of his reasonings. He has only suffered "ignorance," "incompetent" as it is, "to make an objection," and "bid defiance to the powers of human reason." He can never be authorized to assert that, from the nature of moral agency, no one can prove that God can prevent all sin, until he has demonstrated that those powers actually present an insuperable obstacle to their being controlled in their exercise. This however it is scarcely to be expected he can ever do. He at all events cannot do it, without exhibiting an "order of intellect" of which few indications have hitherto been seen in his speculations, and earning a title to "the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments;" for he cannot do it, without completely establishing the great central dogma of Ar-

minianism respecting the self-determining power of the will, subverting forever the reasonings respecting it of President Edwards, by which he chiefly laid the broad foundations of his imperishable fame, and demonstrating that there is an irreconcilable and total contradiction between the nature of moral agency itself, and all the facts of consciousness and experience, on the one hand, and all the great doctrines of revelation that have any respect to our agency, on the other.

Were we then to extend our inquiries no farther than this assumption, that the mere powers of moral agency themselves, *may* alone determine what volitions are exercised; it is abundantly clear that the hypothesis which he founds on it, that God cannot prevent all sin in a moral system, is totally untenable. But this will become still more apparent, if we look at its relations to the mode in which moral beings are in fact controlled in their conduct.

To control beings in their voluntary agency, and prevent them, for example, from sinning, is not to arrest their mental activity, chain their powers in quiescence, or extinguish all perception, feeling, and volition: that were to prevent a moral system itself. Nor is it by an arbitrary act of omnipotence, to create in them a series of obedient actions. That were likewise to prevent a moral system, and substitute a mechanical one in its place. But it is solely and simply to convey to their minds—whatever may be the mode in which it may be supposed to be accomplished—such a moral influence as infallibly to prompt them to exert only obedient choices. There, clearly, is no other manner in which it can be accomplished. Choices are never exerted but as they are the acts of the beings in whom they take place; nor except in the presence and from the excitement of motives; nor but as they are

choices, or refusals of those motives, or the objects which they represent, according as from their influence in exciting involuntary pleasure, or pain, they are regarded as the greatest or least good. There is, therefore, no known, or imaginable mode of influencing beings so as to prevent them from sinning, but that of acting on them through this instrumentality—whatever may be the channel by which it may be supposed to be conveyed to the mind and rendered what it is —of determining, in other words, the moral influence which reaches them, and causing it to consist of such a series and combination of views, as certainly to sway them to obedience. This is the doctrine of the Edwardses, and the great fact on which they relied for the subversion of the Arminian theory, of a self-determining power of the will, and is in like manner the doctrine of Bellamy, Smalley, Dwight, Griffin, Woods, and—leaving the followers of Emmons out of the question—every respectable writer and minister of New England, with the sole exception of Arminians, and "the Dwight professor of theology in Yale College," his fellow-labourer the editor of the Christian Spectator, and their disciples, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto.* No disagreement whatever respecting this fact exists among orthodox theologians, however much they may differ in their views, of the modes in which moral influences are conveyed to the mind, and rendered what they are ;—whether through the instrumentality of a constitutional taste for sin,—through a constitutional relish for holiness, implanted by regeneration,—through the communication of perceptions by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit,—by the agency of created intelligences, or other second causes,—by their excitement by the action of the mind itself,—or by part or all of these united. However much their views may vary in regard to

these points, the doctrine is common to them all, that the choices of the mind are always as the greatest apparent good;—in other words, that the real and sole reason of its choosing as it does, lies in its views of the objects chosen, and the emotions they excite, and that the medium, accordingly, through which its choices are determined, is that exclusively of the moral influence under which it acts. The Ruler of the universe himself obviously proceeds on this great fact, in all the measures of his administration. Were it not a fact, indeed, the very conception of a moral government were an absurdity. Of what service could it be to promulgate laws, and attempt to enforce them by rewards and punishments, if from the very nature of moral agency they can have no influence either to prompt to obedience or withhold from transgression? What better than a mere complication of folly, is the stupendous system of persuasion addressed to men in the gospel, if motives are not the means that determine them in their choices? This great fact lies, in like manner, at the foundation of all human governments. Their professed and sole aim is, to control the conduct of men through the medium of moral suasion, and it is to this great law of moral agency that their enactments owe their whole efficiency. This fact is, indeed, acted on by every human being, in every effort to influence the conduct of others. It is on this that the judge proceeds in enforcing the penalties of law, as well as the ruler in appointing punishments for crimes; on this that the orator proceeds in endeavouring to sway the purposes of his fellow men; the minister, in aiming to turn them to righteousness; and men universally, in every effort at persuasion. "The Dwight professor of theology in Yale College" himself, cannot advance a hair's breadth, in fulfilling the duties of his office,

without proceeding on this great fact, and trampling his own system in the dust. Why should he ever address a lecture to his pupils, and endeavour to lead them to the adoption of his theological views, if their choice between his and other systems is to be determined, not by rational considerations, but by their mere power of putting forth choices, independently of all moral influence? Why, if he acts on his theory, did he attempt, in his Concio ad Clerum, by reasoning and exhortation, to convince the clergy of Connecticut of the truth, and lead them to the adoption of his views, of the nature of sin, and the reasons of its admission into the divine kingdom? And if the undisguised truth could have had no decisive influence against him in his controversy with Dr. Woods, why did he decline openly and fairly to meet the objections of that gentleman, and frankly to admit the inconsistencies into which he was shown to have fallen, and renounce the errors of which he was convicted; instead of resorting to the pretence in order to escape the force of those objections, that one of the doctrines imputed to him, he had only uttered in the form of a "hypothetical statement," in place of a "positive affirmation;" and that another, he had merely advanced in an argument, "*ex concessis?*" He clearly proceeded on "a different and inconsistent hypothesis," in these efforts to accomplish "an effectual refutation" of those objections.

The fact, then, being thus clear and indisputable, that moral beings act universally and solely from motives, in all their voluntary agency, the literal import of the doctrine that God cannot prevent all sin in a moral system is, that he cannot communicate to all the intelligences in a system, or through any possible instrumentality, cause such a series of perceptions to take place in them

as shall infallibly counteract the temptations to which they are necessarily exposed, and sway them to obedience. This, accordingly, was the position which the reviewer should have demonstrated, in order to have authorized his "positive assertion," that no one can ever prove the falsehood of his "hypothetical statement," that God cannot "prevent all sin, or at least the present degree of sin," in a moral system. Nothing can be clearer, therefore, than that his mere statements and reasonings to show that moral beings must at all events continue to possess the powers of moral agency, in order to be competent to exert moral actions, have no concern whatever with the question, whether God cannot infallibly lead them to exert that capacity obediently. Those powers must of course continue to be possessed, and must remain the same, whether exerted obediently or disobediently; and as far as they alone are considered, the possibility and probability of their being exerted in one way, are as great as of their being exerted in any other. The only mode in which the reviewer can sustain his declaration, is to show, that "though or notwithstanding" it is a known and indisputable fact, that motives alone determine the conduct of men, yet that God cannot control them in their agency; and the only way in which he can demonstrate that, obviously is, either that of showing that God cannot determine the moral influence that acts on their minds, or that there is no combination of views and emotions of which they are capable, that is adequate to lead them uniformly to holiness. Neither of these, however, can he ever demonstrate. To attempt the first, were only to repeat the error in another form, into which he has already fallen, of endeavouring to demonstrate that men are in fact, so far as their agency is concerned,

completely independent of God; or placed for ever, by their very nature, beyond the reach of his control. To assert the latter, were in so many words to deny that men are physically capable of a perfect obedience, to contradict those powers of moral agency whose prerogative he is so zealous to defend, and plunge back into the central depths of constitutional depravity, from which he professes to have escaped. To affirm, that in every or any instance, no combination whatever of motives that can be brought to act on a being, can lead him to obedience, is to affirm that no combination of views can be communicated to him, but what will prove a successful temptation to sin. But that clearly cannot be, unless he is so constituted as to be totally incapable of excitement to any other choices, than such as are sinful, and that is to be constitutionally incapable of holiness, or to be physically depraved. To admit him to be capable of any excitement to an obedient action, were to admit that there are motives that are adapted to prompt him to such an act, and that, therefore, if they were given to exert on him their uncounteracted influence, he might be infallibly excited to obedience.

Were we then to carry our inquiries respecting the reviewer's hypothesis no farther than to its relations to the nature of moral agency, we have from those alone abundant evidence of its total error. That however, is but one source of argument against it. Still more momentous proofs of its fatal contradiction to truth, are seen from its relations to the declarations and doctrines of revelation, and the attributes of God.

Thus it presents an open and undisguised denial of the doctrine every where engraven on the sacred page, of God's universal providence over the thoughts, affections, and actions

of men, and all the causes that influence their agency. They exhibit his knowledge, power, and providence alike as extending perpetually to every being to whom he gives existence, and every event that transpires throughout his vast empire. And it is as indubitably the dictate of reason, as it is the representation of the divine word. It is indisputably certain, from the light of philosophy, that God can determine every perception that shall reach the mind of an intelligent being, and accordingly through that—the only medium of influencing his conduct—determine with invincible certainty, the manner in which he will act. Every perception is an effect and is produced therefore by a cause. That cause must obviously be either God himself, or some dependent existence, which he has created and continues in being, and which owes to him its whole power and opportunity to act, through every successive moment. To question this, were in so many words to question the dependence on him of his works, and deny his power over matter as well as mind. "He that planteth the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" He that created every instrument through which perceptions are conveyed to the mind, and endowed the soul itself with its power of receiving them, and all its secret grounds of emotion and springs of activity, cannot he still retain them within his grasp, and determine what influences shall reach and excite them? Has he communicated to any part of his works a superiority to himself, imparted powers which he has not retained, or thrown any portion of his empire beyond the limits of his sway? It certainly is not a dictate of reason, nor compatible with its clearest decisions. He who can demonstrate that there is a solitary spirit existing within the universe, or an atom floating within its illimitable cir-

cuit, that maintains its being independently of him, or has gained in the humblest affection of which it can be supposed to be capable, an exemption from his complete control, can cut the sinews for ever of every argument for the being of God himself, from his works, and render it as possible and easy to demonstrate that no Almighty Creator and Ruler exists.

The reviewer's theory thus stands in open contradiction to all those statements on the sacred page, that represent the world of minds as wholly subject to the divine control; and accordingly denies the universality of God's providence over them, and the causes that influence their agency. If a solitary perception ever leaps into existence in any created intellect, or a single emotion springs up in the secret depths of any dependent spirit, that does not take place wholly by his permission, and result from a cause which he can entirely control and might intercept from that agency, then that event clearly takes place independently, and without the circle, of his providence. And if events take place in that manner in every moral being, and the very powers of moral agency are such that God cannot prevent their occurrence, then indisputably every such being is to that extent, absolutely exempt from his sway, and can no more be claimed to be a subject of his providential government, than though no such government were attempted to be exercised by the Most High.

The reviewer's supposition accordingly, that God cannot prevent all sin, is a supposition that he cannot exert an efficient providence over all the causes that influence the conduct of his moral subjects; and his "positive assertion" that no one can *prove* that God can prevent all sin, is a "positive affirmation" that no one can demonstrate the scriptu-

ral doctrine of the universality of his providential sway. The grand representation of his theory is thus a flat denial of "the general doctrine of the universality of the divine decrees and providential government," which according to his statement Dr. Bellamy made it his principal object in his "treatise" to assert and defend.

But in thus denying God's universal providence over the causes that determine the moral conduct of men, he offers an equal denial of all the declarations and doctrines of the divine word, which imply that he exerts, and are dependent for their truth on his exercising such an absolute control over the means by which they are determined in their actions.

Such are his predictions of the future events of their agency. If he cannot control the causes that are actually to determine men in their future actions, it is indisputably certain, that he can neither determine their actions themselves, nor foresee what they are to be; and can possess no means therefore whatever, of a certainty that he can ever verify any of his predictions, or fulfill any of his promises to his church that relate to the agency of men. If the powers of moral agency are such as from their very nature to be incapable of an efficient control, then it may be that he may be thwarted at every step in his efforts to accomplish his purposes. He can have no more certainty in regard to the elect themselves, who were given to Christ before the foundation of the world, and have been redeemed by his blood, and made kings and priests unto God; than in regard to any others. Though no one else can pluck them from his hand, yet they may themselves escape without exception, and in defiance of every possible preventing influence, remain in alienation from him for ever. The reviewer's assumptions and reasonings on this subject, are in every

respect as applicable to the regenerated, as to the unrenewed—for their powers of moral agency are identically the same—and to the inhabitants of heaven, as to those of earth. If because a being must continue to possess the powers of moral agency under every influence that is employed to determine his conduct, it *may* be that he will exert them sinfully, and therefore no one can *prove* that he will not sin, nor has a right to assert, or think that he will not; it is of course as true of any one being who possesses those powers, as of any other. The proposition is predicated solely of those powers, without any limitation or qualification from the circumstances in which their possessor is placed, his relations to other beings or events, or the moral influences under which he is to exert his agency; and therefore as those powers are the same in all intelligences, and governed by the same causes and by the same general laws, if his affirmations hold true of a single individual in the innumerable throng, they are equally true of every other. He can never prove therefore, on the ground of his reasonings, that there is or can be any certainty to either creatures or God himself, that a solitary subject of his empire will continue to obey him for ever; that a single individual of the human family of this, or any subsequent generation either will or can be kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation; nor that even a solitary sentiment of obedience will ever again swell the heart of a dependent being throughout the illimitable ages of futurity.

Nor can he, for the same reasons, ever prove on the other hand, that there is or can be any certainty that any inhabitant of the divine kingdom will continue for ever to sin, or that either a solitary individual of our race on earth, or of those who are already lost, will ever again transgress the

divine law; and were all who ever obey to be immediately admitted to heaven, and all who revolt expelled from those abodes, then for aught we could know, those who now lament and rebel in the lowest depths of hell, might yet reign in heaven, and those who reign in heaven, lament in hell; nor could we tell that they might not thus often exchange characters and abodes, during the progress of their interminable existence.

No powers of intellect, or efforts of art can ever cover up this horrible feature of his theory. Let him attempt, if he pleases, to escape these conclusions. He will find it as hopeless and absurd a task as was ever undertaken. His vaunted argument may be thrown back to him at every step, and utterly baffle all his efforts.

"Now we say that this is a task which Dr. Woods *cannot* accomplish; and for this very obvious reason, *that the nature of the case absolutely precludes all proof*, being one which *may* involve a palpable self-contradiction. It will not be denied, that free moral agents *can* do wrong, under every possible influence to prevent it. The *possibility* of a contradiction in *supposing them to be prevented* from doing wrong, is therefore *demonstrably certain*. Free moral agents *can* do wrong under all possible preventing influence. Using their powers as they *may* use them, they *will* sin; and *no one can show that some such agents will not use their powers, as they may use them.*" "But this possibility that free agents will sin, remains (*suppose what else you will,*) so long as moral agency remains; and how can it be *proved* that a thing will not be, when for aught that appears it *may be? When in view of all the facts and evidence in the case, it remains true that it may be*, what evidence or proof *can exist*, that it will *not* be? Yea, when to *suppose* it prevented, may involve, for aught that appears, a palpablo *self-contradiction?* And must we, to honor God, affirm boldly and confidently that he can do, what may involve the same contradiction as to affirm that he can cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time? Is God honored by the asser-

tions of mere ignorance, and by our affirming that to be true of him, which may be utterly false?"—pp. 562, 563.

He has thus bound himself down with a weight of chains and fetters that no artifice can sunder or relax, from the possibility of demonstrating that either men or God can have any certainty in regard to any event, or the character of any event, that is ever to transpire in the agency of creatures; as he cannot without an affront to common sense attempt to offer a proof or pretence that his reasonings in this and similar passages, are not in every respect as applicable to any one subject of the divine kingdom, as to any other.

His theory thus offers an instant and blank denial of every doctrine of the gospel that respects the character and condition of intelligences in futurity, divests alike the predictions and threatenings of God of every shade of certainty, and empties all the promises of his word, of all their claims to our reliance, and all the consolations with which they are fraught to us amid the temptations and sorrows of life.

It levels as fatal a blow, in like manner, at all those duties of piety, to the offering of which it is essential that God should be regarded as exerting an efficient sway over his creatures, and able to fulfil all his purposes and wishes. Its relation to the promises of God, and our reliance on their fulfillment, has already been adverted to. How can a being look up from amid the storms and perils of existence here, and intrust to him his immortal interests to be watched over, defended and kept in safety through all the trials by which he is to be buffetted, and rely with unshaken confidence on his power, wisdom, and faithfulness to cause all things to

work together for his good until he shall reach the gates of heaven, if he at the same time carries in his mind a clear and fixed conviction, that from the very nature of his powers as a voluntary agent, God cannot control the influences that are to reach him, and determine his conduct and destiny?

It obviously offers obstacles equally insurmountable to the duty of prayer. What better could it be than an affront to the Most High, to ask of him not to lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from evil, were it believed and felt that these are blessings that are beyond his power to give? Or with what better consistency could supplications be offered for any of the secular bounties or spiritual blessings that are conveyed to us or others through the instrumentality of our fellow men?—peace, safety, domestic bliss, social enjoyments, knowledge, the means and opportunity of usefulness, or the sanctification of friends, the perpetuity, safety, and prosperity of the church, the salvation of the world? It is clear, if the reviewer's theory is true, that no certainty can exist, or assurance be rationally felt, that any one of these blessings can ever lie within the gift of the Creator; and were it to be universally acted on, the voice of prayer would henceforth be stifled for ever, and a night of endless despair diffuse its pall over all the hopes and happiness of our world, that have their foundation in confidence in God. The triumphs of God's children would be quenched by it, and their peace extinguished in even the seasons of the clearest manifestations of his favour, and consternation be carried into the ranks themselves of heaven; for whatever might be the character of the present, a cloud of impenetrable darkness and hopeless uncertainty must brood for ever over the future. Our strongest assurance, in like manner, of the

safety and happiness of those whom death has snatched away amid the brightest demonstrations of reconciliation to God, and preparation for his kingdom, and whose expiring accents were fraught with the ecstatic praises and thanksgivings of the blessed, would inevitably yield under it, to uncertainty and apprehension. For if the arm of the Omnipotent Creator himself is not competent to protect them; if all the infinite efforts of that unquenchable love that redeemed and forgave them, are insufficient to shield them from overpowering tempests of temptation; what might or benevolence can be expected to conduct them to the dwellings of abiding purity and salvation; or who can tell into what hopeless depths of sin and misery they may not again have plunged?

But if these conclusions are thus legitimate, what are those to which this scheme must carry us respecting the character of the Creator and Preserver of this boundless universe, whose destiny is thus utterly uncertain, and whose ultimate catastrophe may so possibly be one of unmixed guilt and misery? Where can we, on this theory, have any decisive proofs or probabilities of his infinite wisdom, or perfect benevolence?

Such are some of the dire results to which the great principles of the reviewer's scheme, if traced to the conclusions which they authorize, inevitably force us; such the total absence of every evidence of its truth, and the resistless demonstrations of its contradiction, to some of the most certain and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and hostility to many of the most sacred duties, precious enjoyments, and heaven-born hopes of piety.

Some of these representations, however, of his theory he may not improbably again disclaim, as he has the just de-

lineations of it by Dr. Woods, protest to us perhaps that no such reasonings as these can touch "the point;" and repeat complaints of error and injustice, in deducing conclusions from his system, that stand in open opposition to doctrines which on the pages themselves of his sermon and review, he frequently professes to hold. No repetition, however, of those complaints, nor renewal of those professions, can alter the facts, or affect the points that are here in question, in the humblest degree. The sole inquiry with which this discussion has any concern is, whether the passages which are transferred from his review and sermon to these pages, are rightly interpreted, and the principles and doctrines which they express, traced to their legitimate results. *His* not having followed them to those results, or dreamed of the consequences to which they inevitably conduct, has nothing to do with the truth or force of any of the foregoing representations or reasonings; nor has his profession or belief of any or all of the doctrines which his hypothesis so clearly contradicts. Nor can his zealous protestation, that he is neither a full disciple, nor partial votary of Arminianism, demonstrate that his theory is not, from its lowest foundation to its upmost topstone, a mere reconstruction of that system, and every where pervaded by even a worse spirit than has usually characterized that. And if there are any who can need any additional evidence that such is the fact, let them look into the pages of the Edwardses, in which they controverted that scheme, and they will find that the great principles, doctrines, and arguments, which were opposed by them, are identically those that form the essence and constitute the character of the reviewer's theory. If he has not himself yet discovered this coincidence of his system with that, nor—after having studied so long and so success-

fully, as he professes, the pages of the elder Edwards, and attempted even to convince the respectable clergy of New England, that they have hitherto essentially misunderstood the import of some of his most important doctrines—has ever even suspected that in every effort he has made to build up his system, he has only been labouring to beat down that which it was the object of that great divine, in his treatise on the will, to sustain,—it may doubtless furnish just matter of wonder, and make shipwreck of all confidence in his qualifications for the discussion of such subjects—but it will be far enough from yielding him any means of invalidating any of the arguments with which his speculations are here assailed, or throwing a shade of uncertainty over any of the facts or principles on which they are founded.

Nor can his urgent asseveration, that "the charge is utterly unfounded in fact," that he has made "an attack on several of the orthodox articles of faith," and "that there is nothing to excuse or palliate such an accusation," ever disprove that charge, or constitute any presumption against its perfect justice. That question is to be determined solely by facts, not protestations, and facts of which his readers will probably feel themselves authorized to form their own opinion, and take the liberty accordingly to call for proofs in place of assertions, and arguments instead of hypothetical and equivocal statements, in which he has already shown, by the arbitrary rules to which he has resorted in interpreting his terms, that but little confidence can with any safety be placed. The whole question at issue, therefore, between him and the public is, what the theory is which he has advanced, and the conclusions which it authorizes; not what he has heretofore believed, or may believe hereafter. Whether he has ever gained a full comprehension of the character

and tendency of his system, or what other inconsistent doctrines, true or false, he may carry in his mind along with it, are points with which this controversy has no possible connexion. Unless he can demonstrate that his theory is totally unlike what *he* has hitherto represented it to be, no denial that he can offer, can render it any the less certain, that he has abandoned in it many of the most essential doctrines of New England orthodoxy, and entered on as real and direct a war against them, as was ever waged by any of their enemies.

This then is the inquiry which he is to meet, openly, fairly, and fully, without resorting to any new and arbitrary definitions of his terms, to adjust them to " the pressure of new objections," or to the aid of " hypothetical statements," and " evasions" of the points at issue, or blank denials, under the pretence of arguing "*ex concessis*," of statements and arguments as incontrovertibly meant to be expressive of his own views, and as demonstratively relied on as any others that are to be found on his pages. If he shall thus openly meet this question, and vindicate his system from objections, he will not only gain a full acquittal and honourable justification, but deserve and doubtless receive from all, " the praise which our admiration confers on the highest intellectual attainments." If he shall not, he may assure himself but one alternative can remain—frankly, unhesitatingly, and publicly to acknowledge the errors of his speculations, and totally to abjure them ;—or hopelessly to sink beneath the weight of the just distrust and odium which his principles must inevitably call down upon him. The fancy that either by open effort, or secret artifice, currency can ever be given to such a reproduction as his, of the worst errors and grossest absurdities of Arminianism, without a solitary

support within, or prop without, to sustain them, or single grace of talent, learning, or sentiment to yield them recommendation, must soon reveal its hopelessness, and meet a fit and final disappointment.

The intimation too may be again renewed, perhaps, that however any may be perplexed or alarmed at the doctrines of this theory, God himself, in making the regions where its friends and teachers labour, the scenes of signal effusions of his Spirit, has given it a sanction that sufficiently authorizes their continuing to maintain and endeavouring to diffuse its principles. Those gracious visitations from above, whatever may be thought to be the reasons of their gift, are matters of joy to all, and at least not less in these than other instances. To the dispassionate, however, if they are to be contemplated in any relation to the propagation of this scheme, they must seem adapted to beget far different impressions from those which the reviewer and his friends have shown themselves to be not unwilling they should excite. They present, it is indisputably clear, whatever else may be thought of them, as instant and resistless a demonstration of the total error of his system, as a voice from heaven itself, or a thousand miracles could yield. Every being rescued by the Almighty Spirit from the empire of sin, is a living proof of the falsehood of his whole doctrine; and every flash of conviction darted into the secret depths of conscience, a flaming thunderbolt hurled against the tottering fabric of his theory. How wise, how wonderful, that the Omnipotent One, whose empire has thus been questioned and power denied,—dispensing with all created agencies—should himself descend with his resistless grace to refute these fatal errors on the scene where they have arisen, and thus re-vindicate to an ador-

ing church his attributes, and re-assert his truth. Who not utterly lost to all the force of evidence and fear of God, could stand amid the wonders of such a scene, and utter or cherish a denial of his power to pluck his creatures from the ranks of sin whenever he pleases, and impress on them the lineaments of his image! Welcome interpositions like these. Widely may they be diffused, and ever may they continue. They will be hailed with thanksgivings by every lover of truth and friend of righteousness; and thousands doubtless who have knelt in supplication that the dangers threatened to the church by these portentous speculations might be averted, will see in them tokens that their prayers are not unheard, nor the blessings they have solicited, utterly withheld.

Such then is the system which the reviewer and those who act with him are so zealously endeavoring to disseminate through the churches, and to which, to give it a readier currency, it is claimed, that many of the distinguished clergy of that land of intelligence and caution have yielded their assent, and are lending their sanction.

On those then the task is devolved of determining whether the public are to be allowed to believe or suspect that they have thus abandoned the doctrines of their churches and principles of their fathers, and become the disciples and propagators of this theory; or whether those representations which have been so industriously circulated, are to be publicly repelled, and their open and decisive influence given to the cause of truth.

By the clergy at large in like manner of those churches, and those churches themselves, it is to be determined, whether it can be safe for the interests of truth, or compatible with their obligations, to leave these errors unrebuked and

unresisted still to be propagated wherever they may; or whether the imperious claims of duty, and the example of their predecessors, do not rather call them to a public and concentrated manifestation of the sentiments with which they regard them, and a united and decisive effort to arrest their threatening progress, and extinguish their disastrous influence.

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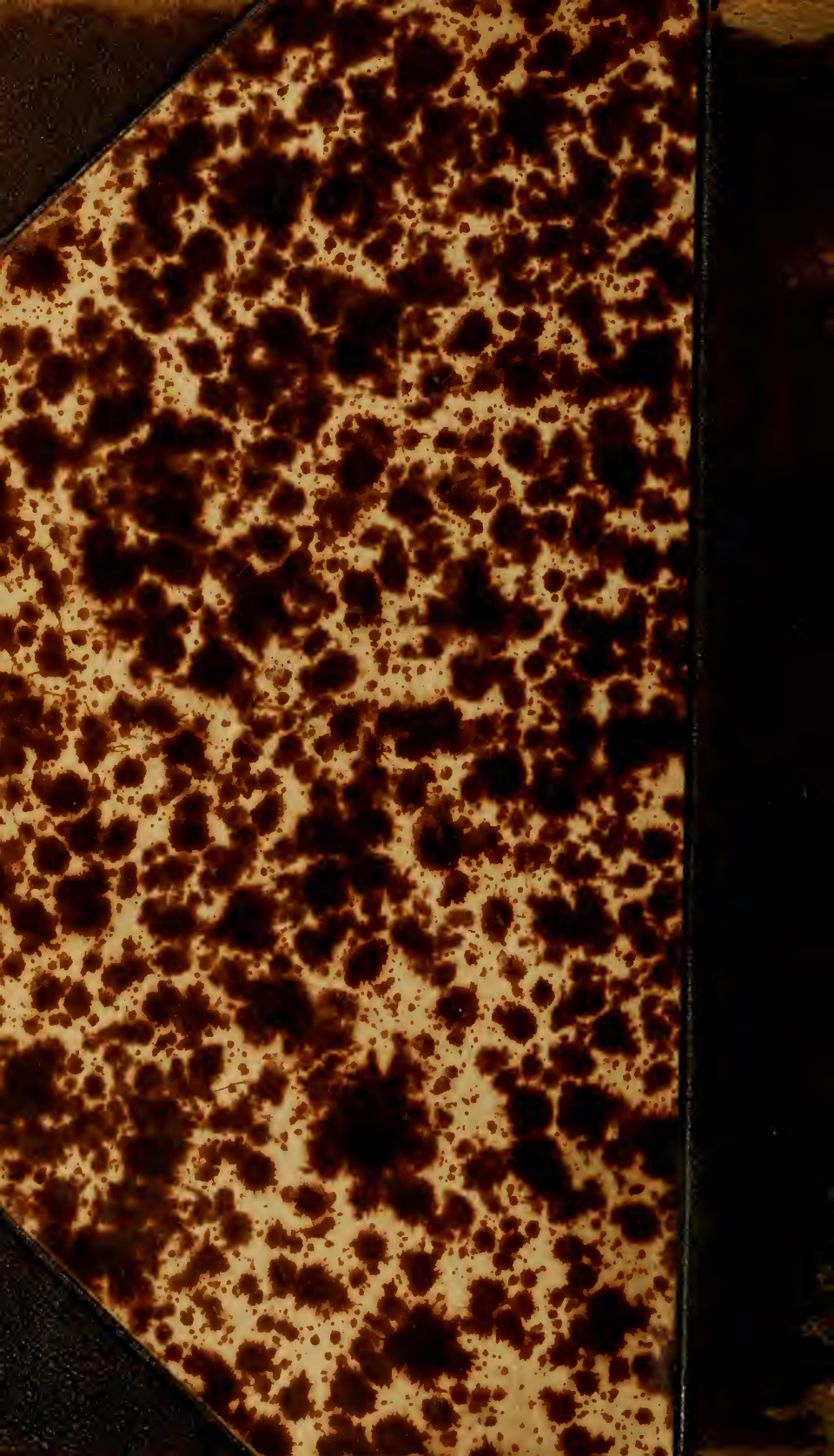
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